HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 322 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 20, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 20, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[*English*]

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Thursday, September 20, 2018, at the expiry of the five hours provided for debate on the third reading stage of Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, every question necessary to dispose of the said stage of the said Bill shall be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Monday, September 24, 2018, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting two petitions today. The first one is from hundreds of citizens and is in regard to the Canada summer jobs program.

Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms identifies, among other things, freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, and freedom of belief as fundamental freedoms.

The petitioners believe that the current Liberal government's proposed attestation requiring Canada summer jobs program applicants to hold the same views as the government could contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister to defend freedoms of conscience, thought and belief, and to withdraw the attestation requirement for applicants of the Canada summer jobs program.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is in regard to the harvesting of organs.

The petitioners are calling on Parliament to move quickly on the proposed legislation to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents of foreign nationals who have participated in his abhorrent trade in human organs.

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first is in regard to postal banking.

The petitioners have pointed out to the House of Commons that nearly two million Canadians desperately need an alternative to payday lenders because of the crippling lending rates that affect poor, marginalized, rural and indigenous communities. As there are 3,800 Canada Post outlets already in existence in rural areas where there are few or no banks, Canada Post has the infrastructure to provide postal banking.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to enact my Motion 166 to create a committee to study and propose a plan for postal banking under the Canada Post Corporation.

PROGRAM FOR THE HOMELESS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is an e-petition signed by a number of Canadians who are petitioning the Government of Canada to recognize that there are 77,550 homeless women in this country.

Despite the elimination of the tampon tax in 2015, menstrual hygiene products remain very difficult to secure because they are unaffordable for this population. There is no national policy subsidizing the cost of sanitary products. Shelters rely on donations, and because these products can cost as much as $200 a year, it is very difficult for the shelters.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to subsidize menstrual hygiene management products, tampons and pads, by distributing them to food banks and shelters to be given free of charge to homeless individuals in need.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the parishioners of St. Barra Parish, Iona, Cape Breton, who have a petition asking that the government remove the words "reproductive rights" from the Canada summer jobs application form.

SENIORS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions. The first one asks the Prime Minister to appoint a minister for seniors and then to develop a national seniors strategy. We now have the Minister of Seniors, three years late, but a national seniors strategy would be excellent.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights that there are physicians and health care professionals who are being coerced and intimidated to participate, against their will, in assisted suicide and euthanasia. The petitioners ask that the conscience rights of health care professionals be protected.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs that are removed without consent or as a result of financial transactions, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join my colleague in also tabling a petition in support of Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. I understand that Bill S-240 will likely be debated and voted on in the Senate today, and it may be with us very soon. These bills both aim to make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ for which there was not consent. We know that this terrible practice exists whereby organs are extracted from political prisoners or prisoners of conscience without their consent, and they may end up being used by people from Canada. We want to put an end to this terrible practice, and hopefully these bills will move forward very quickly.

● (1010)

TAXATION

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first one is e-petition 1581. Historically, the previous government allowed a tax credit for volunteer firemen, and similarly later on for volunteer search and rescue workers. Now we have an increasing amount of rural crime, and we have a tremendous organization called Citizens on Patrol. They act as the eyes and ears of the RCMP, and have proved highly effective in reducing incidents of crime. Citizens on Patrol has unarmed, unpaid, volunteers who do this service. They would also like to have the volunteer tax credit that is received by volunteer firemen and volunteer search and rescue as they provide this service.

HARVESTING OF HUMAN ORGANS

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is regarding Bill C-350 and Bill S-240, which have to do with the illegal harvesting of organs, and citizens moving to another country to receive those ill-gotten organs. We need to have this practice stopped. The bill will be voted on in the Senate, probably today, and returned to us. This practice needs to be stopped immediately.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition this morning on behalf of the constituents of my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood and surrounding areas. These constituents believe that the current Liberal government's attestation requiring that Canada summer jobs applicants hold the same views as the government would contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

HARVESTING OF HUMAN ORGANS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back in the House, and obviously our constituents have been busy through the summer. I have three petitions to present very quickly.

The first petition is in regard to concerned individuals who support Bill C-350 in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 in the Senate. Petitioners want to see that these bills are brought into place to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of financial transactions, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, as well from my constituents, is with concern to the attestation brought forward by the current government in regard to the Canada summer jobs program. They indicate that they are very displeased with that approach and believe it contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally I will read the third petition:

> We the undersigned residents, business owners and cottage owners of Round Lake, Saskatchewan, and those concerned for the well-being of the body of water known as Round Lake...wish to draw attention to the extreme low water level of the Lake, due to the uncontrolled outflow of water. [It] is affecting business, the environment, families and the futures of Round Lake.
>
> Being that the uncontrolled [water flow on the lake] is the result of a disagreement between the Government of Canada and the First Nations of Ochapowace and Piapot; and being that [the control structure and compensation agreements were reached between the Government of Canada and First Nations communities on lakes upstream in the Qu'Appelle Valley; and being that the Round Lake issue has remained unresolved since 2008, we ask that the Minister use her authority to re-establish communication with Ochapowace and Piapot First Nations to work towards a resolution in this matter.

I have seen the lake. It is abhorrent. It is very difficult for the cottage owners. We need this to be taken care of.

The Speaker: I will remind honourable members that, as they know, the presenting of petitions is not the time to engage in debate or give personal views about the petitions. They are to tell us what the petitions are about.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. First, the petitioners believe that the current Liberal government's attestation requirement contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and they ask that the Prime Minister defend the freedoms of conscience, thought, and belief, and withdraw the attestation's requirement for the Canada summer jobs program.

● (1015)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with the international trafficking of human organs. Petitioners are encouraging the Parliament of Canada to move quickly on proposed legislation, Bill C-350 and Bill S-240, in order to restrict the illegal and improper trafficking of human organs around the world.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition, signed by 30 people, about international trafficking of human organs, in support of Bill C-350 in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 in the Senate.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first one is exactly the same as many colleagues have presented this morning, dealing with the appalling trafficking in human organs. Petitioners are asking this House to support both Bill C-350 and Bill S-240 to put an end to the trafficking of human organs. The evidence of the involuntary taking of organs from living persons for sale is something that I think offends the conscience of every Canadian, and I hope the House will respond favourably to this petition.

KURDISTAN

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is an e-petition, and over 500 people have signed it. It focuses on the Government of Turkey and its treatment of the Kurdish people. It asks for the Government of Canada to stand in solidarity with the Kurdish people in holding the Government of Turkey to account, stopping the bombing of Afrin, which is a Kurdish city in Rojava. Because of that bombing, there are now over 100,000 displaced persons. This is a growing catastrophe, and they call on the Government of Canada to make their views known to the Government of Turkey.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

FIREARMS ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to open third reading debate in the House today on Bill C-71, an important piece of legislation in support of public safety and the ability of law enforcement to investigate gun crimes, while at the same time being reasonable and respectful toward law-abiding firearms owners and businesses.

Following years of declining crime rates in Canada, a number of critical statistics concerning firearms pivoted in 2013 to show a significant increase over subsequent years. In 2013, there were 211 attempted murders involving guns; in 2016, there were 290. In 2013, there were 134 gun homicides; in 2016, there were 223. For armed robbery, the numbers jumped from 2,096 in 2013 to 2,870 in 2016. According to the most recent data from Statistics Canada that became available just this summer, between 2013 and 2017 overall offences involving guns increased by 44%. It is this troubling trend that Bill C-71 would help to address, hand in hand with our investment of $327 million over five years, rising to $100 million every year thereafter, to intensify our battle against guns and gangs.

That new funding will be aimed at three key goals: first, increasing the capacity and the effectiveness of the Canada Border Services Agency to interdict gun smuggling at the border; second, bolstering the work of the RCMP to identify and take down illegal weapons trafficking operations; and third, to support provinces, municipalities and local law enforcement in their efforts to disrupt gangs, prosecute offenders, prevent young people from being drawn into gangs in the first place and to help them exit that destructive lifestyle. This initiative has been very well received by our provincial and municipal counterparts and many stakeholders, like those from all across the country who attended our guns and gangs summit last spring in Ottawa. Discussions are well advanced on how to make the best use of the new federal dollars. The new Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction will be rolling out the details in the weeks ahead.

In the meantime, we continue to advance Bill C-71. The public safety committee of the House studied this bill very carefully, and during its consideration it accepted amendments from all of the major parties. I would like to extend my thanks to the committee members who, as always, conducted a very thorough study of the subject matter and sent the bill back to the House in improved form.

During the last election, the Liberal Party ran on very specific campaign promises relating to firearms. Bill C-71 deals with those promises that require legislative change. They were as follows: first, repeal the changes made by Bill C-42 that allowed restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit; second, put decision-making about weapons restrictions back into the hands of police and not politicians; third, require enhanced background checks for everyone seeking to purchase a handgun or other restricted firearm; fourth, require purchasers of firearms to show a licence when they buy a gun and require all sellers of firearms to confirm that the licence is in fact valid before completing the sale; and finally, require firearms vendors to keep records of all firearms inventories and sales to assist police in investigating firearms trafficking and other gun crimes. We are delivering on each of these promises to make our communities safer and to support law enforcement while not targeting law-abiding firearms owners.

First, on the issue of enhanced background checks, currently when deciding whether to issue a possession and acquisition licence, a PAL, the law requires the chief firearms officer of a province or territory to consider the past five years of an applicant's history to determine if their past activities or behaviours indicate a public safety risk.

● (1020)

Bill C-71 proposes to eliminate that five-year limitation. That idea stems from a private member's bill introduced by former Conservative cabinet minister James Moore in 2003. Upon tabling his private member's bill, Mr. Moore told this chamber the following:

> Currently the Firearms Act says that if in the past five years a person has committed a violent crime and has been convicted of a violent crime or of threatening to commit a violent crime, that person cannot apply to own a firearm for five years.
>
> My private member's bill does not say after five years: it says if a person has ever committed a violent crime in their life never does that person get to own a gun. If a person has ever beat his wife or ever committed rape or ever committed murder and is released from jail, never in his life does that person get to own a gun....

Those are the words of the hon. James Moore.

Mr. Moore's bill obviously did not pass, because today the Firearms Act still says five years. Bill C-71, however, will remove that time limitation, as well as expand the kinds of things that the CFO can consider when deciding whether to issue a licence or not. There are, for example, explicit references in the law to gender-based violence. Thanks to amendments made by the committee, which were adopted unanimously, the CFO would also be able to consider an applicant's online behaviour as well. There appears to be broad and multipartisan support for these measures on background checks.

For indigenous hunters who engage in the traditional practices of hunting, the aboriginal peoples of Canada adaptations regulations will continue to apply. The regulations allow an applicant to ask an elder or community leader for a recommendation to go to the provincial chief firearms officer to confirm the importance to the applicant of their engaging in traditional hunting practices, which are, of course, a section 35 treaty right. Therefore, we can see the legal framework here attempting to make sure that the appropriate indigenous considerations are taken fully into account.

Secondly, on the issue of transporting firearms, specifically restricted and prohibited firearms, before former bill C-42 made changes to the Firearms Act in 2015, the owner of a restricted or prohibited weapon was required to get an authorization to transport it, what is known as an ATT, every time the owner took that firearm anywhere. The Harper government loosened that restriction by attaching an automatic authorization to transport to every possession and acquisition licence for the purpose of transporting the firearm home from a store or to an approved shooting range or to a port of entry or a gunsmith or a gun show. Because the ATT was automatic and applied to numerous different destinations, it became virtually impossible for police to detect the transportation of restricted or prohibited weapons for illegal purposes.

Bill C-71 seeks to narrow and clarify the scope of the ATT rules. An ATT would continue to be included automatically with a PAL licence to transport restricted or prohibited weapons to a certified shooting range, but beyond that, a separate ATT would be required. This would assist law enforcement without impacting gun owners in any major way. In addition, we will work to ensure that the firearms centre is properly staffed to issue ATTs as required, and we will provide an electronic portal where firearms owners can apply online and get their ATTs in a matter of just a few minutes. If people need to go to a gunsmith after they have been at firing ranges, they would also be able to get an ATT on their smart phones. Therefore, the objective here is to make sure that the service is efficient.

● (1025)

Third, on the classification practices, it is of course up to Parliament, up to the House of Commons and the Senate, as a matter of law, to determine how firearms are classified. For years Parliament has identified and defined three categories: non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited. Parliament is always free to change those categories if it sees fit. It can change the characteristics that apply to each of the three categories. That is Parliament's sovereign right.

Administratively, after the definitions have been set in law by Parliament, it should be firearms experts who make the technical determination as to which firearm fits into which category. That is a factual, technical function, and it should not be politicized. Bill C-71 makes that point very clear. It grandfathers those individuals who may be adversely affected by the previous government's decisions to allow the cabinet to contradict the experts and assign a lower category to a particular firearm, contrary to the definitions in the Criminal Code.

Let me turn next to the question of licence verification. Currently in Canada, if people want to buy ammunition for a non-restricted firearm, they must show the vendor a valid firearms licence. It might surprise many people to know that they do not currently have to show a valid firearms licence for purchasing a non-restricted firearm.

Mr. David Anderson: Tell the truth, Ralph, you'll feel better. What kind of rubbish is that. You know better than that.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: This formerly mandatory practice was changed—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands that if he wants to contribute to the discussion, he will have an opportunity to do that during questions and comments or during other speeches. Therefore, I would ask that he provide the respect the minister deserves.

The hon. minister.

● (1030)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the practice was changed by the previous Conservative government in 2012. Actually the law was changed so that this became a voluntary provision. The law now says the vendor simply has to have "no reason to believe that the transferee is not authorized to acquire and possess that kind of firearm." In other words, they do not have to ask. They can ask, but they do not have to ask.

Of course, vendors have that option, and all the reputable ones that I know actually ask the question to determine that the licence is still valid. Most businesses probably behave in that way. It is just common sense. However, if someone without a PAL is looking to get a shotgun, for example, that person is more likely to try to buy it from a vendor known not to run the licence check.

Bill C-71 would make it an offence not to verify the licence. This is not only important to stop those who have never had a licence from acquiring a non-restricted firearm. If a gun shop is dealing with a regular customer, the sales clerk might be tempted not to check the licence that he or she has probably seen many times before on previous transactions. However, if that customer had recently lost their PAL due to a court order, the sales clerk would have no way to know that unless he or she actually checked its validity with the registrar. Customer service will be important so that verification can be done in a quick and efficient manner.

On firearms record-keeping, Bill C-71 proposes to make record-keeping of non-restricted firearms a requirement for all businesses. With proper authorization, police will then be able to better trace the origins of firearms found at crime scenes. This was a requirement for businesses from 1979 until 2005. It is also a standard requirement across virtually all of the United States. It is simply a good business practice commonly applied already by major retailers like Cabela's, Canadian Tire and many others.

Some people have suggested that this will amount to a new long-gun registry. Of course, for such an argument to be logical, it would also mean that Canada first had a long-gun registry back in 1979. Obviously, that would be nonsense. To make this point crystal clear, the Conservatives moved an amendment in the committee, which reads as follows: "For greater certainty, nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to permit or require the registration of non-restricted firearms." That amendment was supported unanimously by all members of the public safety committee, who were in total agreement that nothing in Bill C-71 remotely resembles a long-gun registry. That point is now beyond all doubt.

In addition to meeting our platform commitments, we are currently reviewing other options to ensure that firearms do not fall into the wrong hands. For example, we are examining the regulations relating to the safe storage of firearms, especially after hours on commercial premises. Firearms theft from such premises have been steadily rising, and we should try to prevent that trend from getting worse.

We are examining firearms advertising regulations to see if they are appropriate to prohibit the glorification of violence and anti-personnel kinds of paramilitary conduct. We are examining the issue of whether there should be some flagging system with respect to large transactions or bolt sales that may trigger questions on the part of police forces. We are also examining the possibility of enabling medical professionals to flag when they feel a patient may pose a significant risk to the safety of themselves or others.

I would point out that in 2012, Quebec passed what is known as Anastasia's law, which banned firearms in places like schools and relieved physicians of their usual obligations with respect to doctor-patient confidentiality when they felt that someone under their care who owned a firearm might be a danger to themselves or to others. It is a concept that other provinces may wish to examine, and it will be discussed at federal, provincial and territorial meetings this fall.

● (1035)

I will be working with the new Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction on these supplementary measures as well. As members know, the new minister has also been mandated to lead an examination of a ban on handguns and assault weapons in Canada, while not impeding the lawful use of firearms by Canadians. That consultation will be going forward this fall.

When taken together, this strategy represents a responsible firearms package that will help make our communities safer. It will help police forces investigate the illegal use of firearms. At the same time, these measures taken together will not overburden legitimate firearms owners in exercising their legitimate rights.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind members again that when someone has the floor that person deserves the respect of the House. If individuals have anything to say then they should be rising for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you for your speech, Mr. Minister.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the Chair, not the minister.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I want to point out to the minister that the basic premise of Bill C-71 has been flawed from the outset. Rising crime rates have nothing to do with the hunting and sport shooting community. We all know this will do nothing to combat gang crime.

I do have another fairly complicated point I want to raise, and it has to do with discrimination. This bill is blatantly discriminatory. When it comes to security, I think gun control should apply to all people.

Right now, special provisions apply to indigenous peoples. The minister talked about it just now, but there is no mention of it in the bill, and it was not discussed in committee. I know it has to do with section 35. Nevertheless, the point is that all people use firearms, yet indigenous and non-indigenous individuals are treated differently. When it comes to firearms, there should be one set of rules for everyone. That is why indigenous individuals told the committee that Bill C-71 is irrelevant to them.

How can the minister think it is okay for an indigenous person to do whatever he or she wants with a firearm even as the government tightens the rules for hunters and sport shooters?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the source of the issue the hon. gentleman refers to is section 35 of the Constitution of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned that gun owners would be able to use an electronic system to obtain an authorization to transport firearms that were not already automatically authorized.

However, one concern that came up repeatedly in committee is that certain events, like gun shows, could cause a spike in demand.

In light of this government's track record with electronic systems, such as the notorious Phoenix pay system, can the minister guarantee us that the system will work well from the moment it is launched, so that people can apply in an orderly fashion and receive their authorizations within a reasonable time frame?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, I note that the hon. gentleman raised issues similar to this at the committee level, and there were in fact amendments made to ensure that we were accommodating the very point he is raising now.

It is incumbent upon the government and the administrators of the program to monitor customer service very carefully to make sure that the services are being delivered in an efficient and timely way, so that those who are simply pursuing their legitimate and proper rights under the law can do so without being inconvenienced. That is certainly our objective.

In subsequent days, if they identify difficulties with the administration, or service levels or standards that are not sufficient, I encourage members of Parliament to draw that to the attention of the government, and we will do our level best to make sure the service levels are proper.

● (1040)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, my concerns are around the whole question of timeliness and cost for this program as well. The member for Regina—Wascana indicated that there will now be a requirement that ATTs be requested. They have a number of different circumstances in which that would be the case, yet he says this will not be impeding lawful gun owners. The number of additional steps they need to take is impeding them. This is what is so irritating. It does not change any of the crime scenarios that we are facing in Canada.

If all of these extra processes are going to be put in place and done in a timely manner, will the minister tell the law-abiding gun owners of Canada what it is going to cost them to call in or use that service over and over again? It is going to cost them money to have that bureaucracy set up. What is it going to cost Canadians and law-abiding gun owners to get their ATTs?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the provisions in Bill C-71 are modest and reasonable, and they do not entail a significant new cost. In fact, the hon. member is referring to provisions related not to all firearms but only prohibited and restricted weapons. It is just those two categories, not all firearms.

As well, the ATT will continue to be automatic, attached to the PAL. Whenever the transportation is to a certified gun range, that includes 95% of the transportation activity. Therefore, the amount of change here from the perspective of the firearm owner is very small.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for taking the time today to define the challenges regarding gun violence in Canada and providing us with the reasoning behind this bill. I represent a largely rural riding, Fundy Royal, and have spent considerable time talking to my constituents and other stakeholders about this bill, providing feedback throughout the process.

Could the minister tell this House how he evaluated the feedback he received from members who represent rural areas, and how it was incorporated in this legislation?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, that input and feedback from rural Canadians and from members of Parliament who represent rural Canadians, was extremely important. The very definition of the platform commitment from three years ago was to accomplish objectives related to public safety without imposing unreasonable burdens upon legitimate firearms owners.

One of the significant demonstrations of that is the very point I made in referring to the previous question, where a restricted or a prohibited weapon is being transported to a shooting range. This accounts for 95% of the transportation activity, and that authorization will continue to be included in the PAL itself. There will be no incremental change or burden with respect to firearms owners.

That is one illustration among several where the views and concerns of rural Canadians, hunters, farmers, fishermen and so forth have been taken into account.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, my riding of Kootenay—Columbia often gets referred to as the Serengeti of Canada. We are so fortunate that every predator-prey relationship is still intact in my riding. Hunting is very much a part of everyday life in my riding.

The kinds of concerns I have heard from people like Richard, for example, relate to whether there is anything in this bill that will add to the administration time or cost for your average everyday hunter.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, to my knowledge, there is not. When it comes to service delivery in the verification of a licence, for example, it is extremely important that the firearms program be able to respond to questions in a quick, efficient and timely manner.

I would encourage all members of Parliament, if they discover circumstances in which their constituents are not receiving that timely service in an efficient way, to draw that to the attention of the government. We will do our very best to make sure that the standards are improving.

● (1045)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, maybe my memory is just too good but I remember early in my political career that the minister led the government's attack on Prairie farmers when they tried to sell their own grain, which led to them serving time in jail.

I am just wondering if it is a coincidence that the minister has been put in charge of this attack on legitimate firearms owners. Is he going to use those same tactics of using multiple government departments and agencies against legitimate firearms owners the way that he did against farmers in western Canada?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the hon. gentleman was wrong when he raised that issue 20 years ago and he remains wrong today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise again today to speak about the logical absurdity at the heart of Bill C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms. We on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security have read and worked on the text of the bill. The conclusion is inescapable: the Liberals are trying to look like they are fighting crime, but in reality, they seem to be favouring the rights of criminals over those of law-abiding citizens. This is nothing new. Canadians are all too familiar with the Prime Minister's track record. I do not need to persuade anyone that the Prime Minister has an overly liberal attitude towards terrorists and street gangs.

Bill C-71 proves my point. We have been debating this bill for some time in the House, but I can guarantee you that thousands of citizens have been continuing the discussions across Canada. Yesterday, my colleague from Lethbridge presented a petition signed by 86,000 law-abiding Canadians — certainly not criminals — calling for Bill C-71 to be scrapped.

The Prime Minister likes to brag every chance he gets about working for reconciliation with first nations. This has been yet another failure, since there have been no discussions with first nations. Maybe he thought it would be too difficult to have a conversation with them, so he did not bother.

Firearms are a way of life for many indigenous peoples. They hunt every day, as it is part of their ancient traditions, and we understand that. However, they were not able to share their views, except in committee, and only because the Conservatives requested that first nations witnesses appear. Those representatives said they did not deem that Bill C-71 applied to them and they had no need for it. They therefore have no intention of obeying it. That is a pretty serious problem.

As I said earlier, we have not debated Bill C-71 for quite some time. I would therefore like to remind Canadians what the bill is all about. Let me remind Canadians that this bill does nothing to fight street gangs and organized crime. I would also remind Canadians that the bill is an attempt by the Prime Minister to impose a gun registry and yet another burden on law-abiding citizens for no good reason.

Now I will go over some of the finer points of the bill to illustrate to what extent the Liberals have lost their way. The following are some of the gaps in Bill C-71: the proposed legislation would remove the reference to the five-year period that applies to background checks for permit applications, thereby eliminating any time restriction on those checks. What is more, every time there is a transfer of ownership of a non-restricted firearm, the purchaser and vendor will have to check whether the licence is valid. Retailers will also be required to keep records of their inventories and sales at their own expense. The current wording of the bill repeals parts of our former Bill C-42, an act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other acts, which gives parliamentarians, not the RCMP, the power to classify firearms. Under this bill, specific transport authorization would be required every time a restricted or non-restricted firearm is transported across communities, except when a firearm is transported between a residence and an approved shooting range, as the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness said.

In his speech, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness mentioned that the amendments of all the recognized parties had been accepted. However, we proposed 44 amendments and only one was accepted. The members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security worked extremely hard. We took off our jackets, rolled up our sleeves and worked for hours to make this bill more logical. We proposed 44 amendments to improve the bill. They were not ideological amendments. The Liberals rejected all of them except for one.

One of our amendments proposed that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness be the one to change the classification of firearms based on recommendations from the manufacturer and the RCMP. This amendment would have prevented the RCMP from having a complete monopoly over the classification of firearms and ensured that consultations would precede any reclassification. That would have ensured public accountability by forcing the minister to provide his reasons for the reclassification in the Canada Gazette. The Liberals rejected that amendment.

We also proposed an amendment that would have made it unnecessary to conduct background checks on people seeking to renew a firearm licence or firearm owners the year of the first background check since the continuous eligibility process involves daily checks. The amendment sought to simplify the process without reducing the number of checks. Of course, we all agree that background checks must be conducted.

● (1050)

We wanted to improve the bill so as to make it a little simpler, but we were rebuffed. We also proposed that people on indigenous reserves or in remote areas who live off hunting be exempt from the regulations on firearms transfers, but once again we were told no.

We are now at third reading stage, and I believe it is important to remind Canadians of the Conservative Party's position on this matter. Canada's Conservatives believe that Canadians' safety should be the top priority of any government. Talk is not enough; action and specific measures are needed. Unfortunately, this law does not have any new measures to tackle the gang violence in Surrey or Toronto and the increased crime rate in Canada's rural communities.

We cannot trust the Liberals when it comes to firearms legislation, because they are not cracking down on criminals who use weapons to commit violent crimes, and they are treating law-abiding gun owners like criminals.

The Conservatives will continue to advocate for real action to keep Canadians safe, and we will focus our efforts on the criminal causes of gun violence.

Our leader was very clear yesterday when he said that next year, in 2019, when the Conservatives form government, we will repeal Bill C-71 and replace it with a law that targets criminals and street gangs, not law-abiding Canadians.

We have concerns about Bill C-75, another bill introduced around the same time. The government claims that Bills C-71 and C-75, which were introduced in tandem, are meant to combat gun violence. However, as we have said, Bill C-71 will criminalize law-abiding gun owners. Bill C-75 is even worse. It will turn certain criminal offences, such as participating in an activity of a terrorist group, administering a noxious substance, like the date rape drug, advocating genocide, or participating in organized crime, into offences that could be punishable by a fine. It makes absolutely no sense for the government to do this.

Criminals are criminals. Unless the government stops trying to please and mollify interest groups every time it decides to do something, it will never be able to introduce meaningful, relevant measures that really tackle the problem.

Under Bill C-75, what are now certain criminal offences could become punishable by mere fines. They say their goal is to relieve pressure on the justice system. If the justice system is a problem, fix it. Criminal sanctions should not be downgraded just because the government has a problem.

We will take care of this next year.

In addition to making life difficult for law-abiding individuals, Bill C-71 is telling business owners, people who work hard for their money, to keep records about clients and firearms. They are being forced to keep those records for 20 years. They will have to have a computer system. The government is forcing them to do more, but they do not have the money to do it. Any costs associated with record-keeping will be their problem, unless there is something else we have not heard about.

I would now like to talk about the difference between the work of elected officials in the House of Commons and that of public servants or bureaucrats. Once again, the government is putting Canadians' safety in the hands of bureaucrats instead of allowing elected officials to decide what is important for Canadians. For example, the government is giving the RCMP total control over firearms reclassification. It is now up the RCMP to decide whether an individual is a criminal for owning a firearm that the RCMP now deems to be unacceptable.

We think we should be playing that role, even though it is true that no one here is an expert in the matter. We would need to get accurate information and advice from manufacturers and the RCMP. Then, the minister would make a decision based on the evidence. It is up to us to tell Canadians that after holding consultations or conducting checks, we decided to change the classification. Why would we not be able to do that?

● (1055)

Why let the RCMP make those decisions on our behalf? Once again, the government is giving power to bureaucrats who are not accountable to anyone, who can sit in their offices and decide to change the rules and prohibit a firearm without us having any say in the matter. What are we doing here? This is our job. We are not perfect, but that is why we would need to listen so that we could understand the situation properly and make an informed decision.

With regard to the registry, this is the second time that the Liberals have tried to punish law-abiding citizens. The first time was in 1993. Twenty-five years ago, the "little guy from Shawinigan" introduced a registry and told us not to worry because it would cost only $2 million. Shortly after that, we learned it would cost $2 billion, and we all know what happened next.

Now the Liberals are introducing a bill that requires retailers to collect data and send it to the government if their business shuts down, but they deny that this is a gun registry. That is what they want us to believe. As the saying goes, they are taking us for fools. They are trying to tell us in every possible way that this is not a gun registry. As soon as someone enters data on a computer, and businesses are required to send that data to the government if they shut down, what is that? It means that information on citizens and on guns is being shared. That is a kind of registry.

Getting back to indigenous peoples, I asked a question on that topic after the minister's speech. He replied simply that this pertains to section 35 of the Constitution. The minister just said directly that, from the standpoint of national security and harmonizing security across Canada, there is a constitutional problem. In its current form, Bill C-71 is unconstitutional if it applies to indigenous peoples. Indigenous representatives told us that themselves, and the minister just confirmed it. Now what is happening? The Liberals are pushing ahead, and once again, the first victims they go after are our law-abiding hunters and sport shooters. We have no shortage of laws in Canada. This is not the United States. It currently takes eight months to get a licence, and there are quite a few hoops to jump through.

I realize that the Constitution gives indigenous peoples certain rights. Still, as I said when I asked the minister my question, people who own guns are human beings, citizens, on an equal basis as other Canadians. Why would we impose a law on one group of individuals that would not apply to another group under the Constitution? That will not work.

I know this is complex, but I think law-abiding citizens are entitled to wonder why this bill is targeting them instead of criminals. The Liberals have yet to answer that question, and they cannot always claim it is because of the Constitution. When it comes to safety and security, that answer is not good enough. The government cannot just fool around with safety and security by simply saying that the Constitution protects its decision and that is that. That is not going to work.

The Conservatives are being told that we are all talk and no action. I just want to remind the House of what our government did to fight crime. When we were in government from 2006 to 2015, we fought tirelessly to keep Canadians safe. For example, we passed the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act. This act simplified the licensing system while strengthening firearms prohibitions for people who had been convicted of an offence involving domestic violence. We also passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, which strengthened bail provisions for people accused of serious offences involving firearms.

The legislation we passed to tackle organized crime and ensure protection in the justice system provided police officers and justice officials with new tools that would go a long way in fighting organized crime. We supported the national crime prevention strategy. We funded initiatives across the country to advance Canada's crime prevention and community protection objectives under the national crime prevention strategy.

● (1100)

We created the northern and aboriginal crime prevention fund under the national crime prevention strategy in order to meet the needs of northern and aboriginal communities when it comes to crime and community safety.

We created the youth justice fund. In December 2006, the guns, gangs and drugs component of the youth justice fund was put in place to help rehabilitate young offenders.

We also created the youth gang prevention fund in 2006 to support community groups that work with troubled youth in order to prevent them from joining gangs by addressing the risk factors associated with gangs.

In other words, we kept our promises and worked for law-abiding citizens, not against them.

Let no one doubt our determination to fight crime. The Liberals, on the other hand, promised $327 million almost a year ago, but not a single penny has surfaced so far. The Liberals say they want to fight crime, they promise money, but we have yet to see a single penny.

Crime and gangs do not take time off. Gangs keep on committing crimes. The current government is spending a lot of money on a lot of silly things. They promised money to fight gangs and we agree with that, but now one year has gone by and we have yet to see a single red cent. That is outrageous. We need action now.

History is repeating itself. In 1993, the Liberals created the gun registry to make it look like they were fighting crime. Twenty-five years later, the Liberals are pulling out the same old strategy in the hope that Canadians will again be fooled by the smoke and mirrors of the Prime Minister and his team. They tell us that they are looking after us and will help up. In reality, Canadians are not fools. That was demonstrated by my colleague's petition this week. People understand that this is not the way to fight crime. We will deal with the problem next year.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

We saw the previous government's antics with respect to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and there is also the fact that they were forced to reverse course a few times by the Supreme Court of Canada. It worries me to hear him say that we cannot always invoke the charter to get around the law.

I have two questions for my colleague. Does he believe that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a law, and thus in the realm of law, and what does he know about this section of the charter we have been talking about, section 35, as it applies to Bill C-71?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: My dear colleague, in order to prevent Bill C-71 landing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member once again to address his comments through the Chair.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, this is about keeping Bill C-71 out of court. I am essentially helping this government. I am telling the government not to do this because it will be found unconstitutional. I will not go any further, since it is a complicated matter, as my colleagues know.

The important thing here, I will say again, is security. If indigenous peoples are not subject to this law, what can the government do to fix that?

● (1105)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it curious that the Conservatives are trying to confuse things, claiming this is a registry. My colleague who knows so much about the history of the registry should know that before the registry was created, sellers were legally required to maintain documentation on sales, as set out in Bill C-71.

In 2012, when the House was debating the bill to abolish the registry, the Conservatives invited a witness to appear, Rick Hanson, who was then the Calgary chief of police. He testified in committee, or maybe before the Senate committee. He explained that he supported abolishing the registry, but he also said that if the Conservative government wanted to abolish the registry, it would then have to bring back the point of sale records, which is exactly what this bill does.

Could my colleague tell me whether he does or does not agree with this witness, the former Calgary chief of police, whom the Conservatives invited to speak in favour of abolishing the registry? This witness said that this aspect of the law should be restored.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I was not there when the police officer from Calgary testified. However, I can say that the existing legislation to control restricted and prohibited firearms is effective.

We put an end to the long gun registry, which made Canadian hunters and the community in general happy. What we are speaking out against today is the fact that the Liberals are attempting to bring in a registry of sorts through the back door.

In any case, the main issue is that the government is creating a smokescreen by telling Canadians that it will keep them safe and then focusing on the wrong target.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for his speech, but I think an episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants* contains more factual information than his speech did.

With regard to the registry, my colleague does not seem to understand that, when an individual purchases a firearm from any merchant, the merchant takes note of that person's name and address, as well as the model and serial number of the firearm. Whether the weapon is purchased at Canadian Tire or Cabela's, the process is the same. That is just good bookkeeping.

Last year, the Conservatives quoted a lot of bookkeepers. I suggest they continue to consult with them. It is just good bookkeeping to keep all of those sorts of files in case Revenue Canada wants to look at them. Those files are already kept. We are only seeking to legislate that they be kept for 20 years.

With regard to criminal records, the Conservatives seem to think that we should not look back any further than five years. Why five years?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, that is not at all what I said. Our amendment proposed background checks for a period of 10 years because background checks through an individual's lifetime, as required under the bill, come with their own host of issues regarding the age of the firearms licence applicant. For example, an 18-year-old's application will not be processed the same way as the application of a 50-year-old. Under current legislation, the background check in that case would have to go back 50 years. That makes no sense.

We believe that a background check for a period of 10 years is enough to determine whether a person has a dangerous background that might justify denying the licence. We could do without the "SpongeBob" remarks.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague made an excellent presentation on this very serious issue.

Hugh Nielsen from the Lower Mainland Métis Association said that Bill C-71 "will hit the rural farmer who has to use a firearm. It will hit the first nations who are trying to make a living in remote areas with that firearm, which is a tool for survival. It will hit the ordinary target shooter, but I do not see anybody from the gangs in Abbotsford or Surrey coming through our courses to take the PAL", which is the personal acquisition licence.

Could the member elaborate on why the Liberals are refusing to target criminals and what a Conservative government would do differently?

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. She has identified the problem we are talking about today at third reading of Bill C-71: the government is doing everything to attack law-abiding citizens and nothing to deal with street gangs.

Yesterday, our leader said that Bill C-71 was so ill-conceived and useless that the Conservative government would simply repeal it and introduce effective legislation with specific provisions to deal with street gangs. We will focus on criminals, not law-abiding citizens.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know why my colleague does not think the initial background check should include a person's entire criminal record. Obviously, the amount of time that has passed since a given crime will be taken into account. A 40-year-old simple marijuana possession charge will not matter as much as a 40-year-old violent armed robbery charge.

Why does my colleague think it is not important to go that far back? Serious charges might well be relevant.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, let me make it clear that a criminal record is permanent. It does not matter if a particular charge goes back 30 or 40 years. Once someone has a criminal charge on their record, it stays there forever.

Background checks will be more relevant if they show substance abuse problems, domestic violence, or things a person may have said at 15 but would never say at 30 or 40. People do things in their youth that are not necessarily crimes but that can influence whether a licence is issued. Criminal records, even 30-year-old records, are included in background checks.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work of the hon. member on the committee.

The position of the Conservative Party prior to and during the committee work was that Bill C-71 is essentially a backdoor registry. There were supporting witnesses who said that this was a backdoor registry. The hon. member moved an amendment which said that this cannot be construed in any way, shape or form as a registry. The committee was persuaded by the hon. member's arguments that this was not a registry.

Is it still the position of the member and his party that Bill C-71 is a backdoor registry?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I did not put this amendment forward, but it was one of ours. The Liberals were very keen to accept it.

However, a closer look at the amendment reveals that it does not change the law. The Conservatives moved 43 other amendments that were important and could have made the bill work, but all were rejected. The amendment that was adopted adds one single line. The Liberals are pretty happy about the fact that nothing really changed because the other amendments were rejected.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for their speeches.

The issue of gun control is never an easy one to debate. After all, there are law-abiding gun owners. However, victims of gun crimes have told us tragic and horrible stories. We cannot just lump everything together. We have to respect both sides of the debate, which can be very emotional.

Unfortunately, over the course of the past 15, 20 and 25 years, the debate has been politicized, and that does not serve public safety nor the making of good public policy. The debate on Bill C-71 is proof of that. After this bill was introduced, the Liberals sent out fundraising emails. In the House, we also heard Conservative members whisper their thanks to the Liberals for providing a quote to be included in their solicitations. Political fundraising on the backs of victims of gun crimes and gun owners who simply want an acknowledgement of their views can lead to problems and does not advance public safety and public policy.

Let us put this aside and consider the facts before us.

● (1115)

[*English*]

Notwithstanding Bill C-71, I want to start by recognizing something that everyone in this House agrees on, which is this disturbing trend we are seeing in particular in urban centres, in Canadian cities. It is a trend that is so problematic we have seen violence in Toronto, Surrey and other communities such as those.

I was proud to work with our leader, Jagmeet Singh, in writing a letter to the Prime Minister recognizing that more needs to be done to address the root causes of what is causing this violence, whether it is the radicalization of young vulnerable people who are facing all sorts of issues, mental health issues, extreme poverty, victims of the housing crisis, who are being recruited into gangs, their vulnerability being preyed upon by these types of organizations, or whether it is the fact that cities want to see the federal government do more. What form that will take remains to be seen. We will be very engaged in that debate. However, the fact of the matter is that there is a serious issue in this country that needs to be addressed. When I hear what the Conservatives say, the Liberals say, and we as New Democrats say, it is something we all agree on and will be moving forward on in the following months.

As pleased as I am to hear the minister raise the issue of what needs to be done at the border for firearms coming in from the United States, what needs to be done to address the spike in rural crime that is leading to, among other things, the theft of firearms owned by law-abiding firearms owners, or dealing with those issues I mentioned a few seconds ago relating to what is happening in cities notably with regard to gang violence, while the minister is saying the right things and seems to be on the right track, it is clear that more work needs to be done. Arguably, what the government is proposing is not enough. More needs to be done not only to invest in these things but also to tackle them in a more surgical way.

[*Translation*]

To come back to Bill C-71 specifically, there are several elements I want to discuss.

The first is the least controversial. The way I see it, everyone agrees, or at least should agree, on background checks. There is one thing that I think needs to be cleared up: contrary to what the Conservatives have claimed in committee and in the House, background checks already cover more than the required five-year period, owing to several court rulings. This is already being done by default. The only thing Bill C-71 does is enshrine lifetime background checks in law.

As my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue just mentioned in her question to the previous speaker, background checks are not meant to punish people or to block someone from buying a gun or getting a licence just because they shoplifted a bag of candy from a corner store 30 years ago. They are meant to identify someone who might have been arrested 15, 20 or 25 years ago on domestic violence charges or for uttering threats against women.

That is the kind of person we want to identify, not someone who was arrested at 16 for simple possession of cannabis or for shoplifting, like the example I just gave. I am talking about much more serious crimes that can represent a major threat to public safety and security. As we learned from the studies that have been presented to us on violence against women and self-inflicted violence, the suicide rate is extremely high, and firearms are a commonly used method. These are the issues we need to seriously examine. We all agree on background checks.

As for the issue of retailers keeping records, the opposition wants to portray this as a backdoor registry. Let me be clear. Such records have been kept in the United States for a very long time, and even in Canada, before the gun registry was created in the 1990s, record-keeping was already required under the law.

As the retailers who appeared before the committee said themselves, every respectable business owner who wants to maintain proper records already does this, for accounting purposes, for example. The bill is only meant to ensure that the few non-compliant businesses—which is a very small minority, I might add—are brought into line. The records also need to be standardized, to make it easier for police officers to do their jobs, which is central to this matter.

● (1120)

[*English*]

When the registry was abolished in 2012 by the Conservative government, there was one witness in particular whose testimony stood out to me. Calgary police chief Rick Hanson, who was brought to committee by the Conservative members, spoke in favour of abolishing the registry. He pointed out two things. The first was that while he was favourable to abolishing the registry, there needed to be more robust PAL verifications, which included background checks. The second was that when one firearm owner is transferring to another, whether through a private sale or otherwise, and I will come back to that in a moment, because that is part of Bill C-71, he stated, "We must reinstate point of sale recording. This existed prior to the gun registry", which is an important distinction, not that it is another registry but existed prior to the gun registry, "and was useful for two reasons. The first is that it allowed for proper auditing of gun stores to ensure that they are complying with the law requiring them to sell only to those with proper licences. That is a starting point should that gun be identified as being used in a criminal offence."

One element that someone playing devil's advocate to this point might want to raise is to ask about the costs imposed on a business by doing so. The fact of the matter is, to go back to a point I made earlier and a point that everyone in the House should agree on, all reputable businesses already do this. Apart from some minor tinkering, as the process goes forward through regulation for ensuring that the record-keeping is uniform, for all intents and purposes, any costs associated with this change to the law will be minimal, particularly considering that the law already required this prior to the creation of the gun registry in the 1990s.

[*Translation*]

This is very important. The police officer I quoted earlier emphasized that. When representatives of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, they made it very clear that this is an important tool in the work they do. They said that when retailers maintain standardized records, they feel a little more confident when they have to go and talk to a retailer as part of a criminal investigation for a crime involving a firearm.

[*English*]

That brings me to the next point, the question of transferring from one firearm owner to another, in a private sale for example, and the need to verify that the person's licence is valid. One of the concerns that was raised in committee was the generation of more than one reference number during such a transfer, so a reference number for each firearm transfer. For example, if individual X is transferring to individual Y, each firearm would generate an individual reference number. When one read the legislation as it was originally drafted, before being sent to committee, the plural was used. Officials comforted us by saying the plural was always used in drafting legislation and, unless otherwise specified, could mean the singular and therefore only one reference number.

Putting aside all that technicality, I proposed an amendment so that only one reference number would be generated per transfer, regardless of the number of firearms being transferred from one individual to another. That amendment was adopted unanimously by all members of the committee.

To create greater certainty in law, it is not a question of registering the reference number to ensure the individual is respecting their moral and public safety obligations, but now also an obligation under the law to simply verify the validity of another individual's licence. I would argue 99.9% of responsible firearm owners in Canada already do that anyway. It is to make sure that the reference number is not portrayed as some kind of bogeyman, it is simply a tool used by the chief firearms officer to ensure that individual is respecting the law. That amendment is extremely important to make sure we have that certainty and that the intention behind the generation of that number is extremely clear.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Some proposed amendments regarding authorization to transport firearms were not adopted. This was a highly controversial issue. We realize that in the bill that the Conservatives introduced at the time, automatic authorization was almost always a problem. Police forces and other stakeholders brought up these problems.

The government made a change to stop the automatic authorization for every case, even though it still happens in some cases. One important point came up. Currently, there is automatic authorization to transport a firearm from the store to the location where the firearm will be stored, for example, the owner's home. An authorization would also be automatically issued to transport the firearm to a shooting club or range, so that the owner can practice shooting. One important point is missing, which is the transportation of the firearm from the location where it is stored or the shooting club or range to a government-approved businesses that services firearms. This is extremely important because, as we heard, a damaged weapon can be a safety hazard and can be dangerous.

We were told it is important to be able to transport a firearm from the place where it is stored or used legitimately, such as a gun club, to the place where it is to be repaired. Interestingly, an amendment was proposed by a Liberal member, an associate member of the committee who was not present for our deliberations. The New Democratic Party, represented by me, and the Conservative Party supported the amendment, but unfortunately, the Liberals rejected it. That is one aspect of the bill that still needs work.

I want to emphasize that there is an extremely important public safety element here, one we have to take very seriously. I mentioned it earlier in my speech when I talked about tragic situations related to street gang violence and horrific experiences that victims shared with the committee. PolySeSouvient was formed after the horrifying events at École Polytechnique, and in the years since, it has taken on the tremendous task of making sure elected representatives understand the importance of implementing appropriate rules for the use of firearms.

A retired RCMP officer told us the story of her daughter, who was murdered by her ex-spouse. His campaign of harassment turned violent, and a gun was used to commit the crime.

[*English*]

In those situations, it is important to be respectful of those victims and to understand the advocacy work that they are doing to make sure that the gun control that we adopt as legislators is appropriate, ensures public safety and achieves those objectives.

At the risk of repeating what I said at the outset of my speech, for too long there has been a division. Different political parties, which have been in power at different times, have put into confrontation the needs of these victims for better gun control to ensure public safety and the advocacy work they are doing against the advocacy by law-abiding firearms owners, who are simply trying to make sure that the regulations and laws that are adopted do not create an overbearing burden and a cumbersome system on sports shooting, hunting or the different activities that take place in our constituencies. This is not just in rural constituencies, but even in suburban areas such as mine where individuals who will not necessarily be hunting in the riding, but who will go to other areas to engage in sports shooting.

It is important that we stop putting these two groups as being in constant confrontation, that we stop trying to exploit one group or another. If we really want to adopt good public policy and ensure public safety, we need robust background checks to make sure that individuals who have serious mental health issues, those with a history of violence against women and who make misogynous threats of awful violence, do not obtain firearms. We must also listen to individuals who respect the law and are willing to work with government and elected officials to make sure that we are adopting good, sound public policy that does not go in one direction by creating a specific burden that does not enhance public policy. We need to create awareness among elected officials that we are not constantly fighting with one group or another and that we recognize as elected officials that none of that is achieving the objectives that we all say we want to achieve.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

We will vote in favour of Bill C-71 for the simple reason that most of the provisions it introduces were already part of the legislation before the registry was created, including provisions on record-keeping by retailers. As far as background checks are concerned, we are simply codifying what is already being done. Lifetime background checks are already being done in some cases. They go back further than five years if there are any red flags. We can support that part of the bill, since these are good measures and they are not that onerous.

However, to truly address the problem of gun violence committed by street gangs or other individuals in major cities and in our communities, such as Toronto and Surrey, we have to acknowledge that a lot remains to be done. We also have to do more to address the suicide rate, which is extremely high, especially since suicides are often committed with firearms. One suicide is one too many. Even though we support Bill C-71, it does not go far enough in that respect.

I urge the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Prime Minister to acknowledge that there is a lot more work to be done and to work with us and all stakeholders on ending the partisanship that has marred this debate for far too long and prevented Canadians from having a healthy debate on the issue of firearms. That would allow us to adopt effective public policy to ensure public safety.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member's speech reflects his contribution at committee, which is always thoughtful and quite effective.

I agree with the sentiments that he expressed toward the end of his speech, which unfortunately seems to pit literally law-abiding gun owners against those who have been victimized by firearms. It does seem to be like a dialogue of the deaf, but it is where we are and it is extremely frustrating. As the chair of the committee, I was amazed to realize how much angst these bills produce.

I am sure my hon. colleague would agree that this is a relatively modest bill and the impositions that it would make are on those who sell firearms and those who use firearms, and are quite modest. Earlier a Conservative member said that these would be undue burdens on lawful firearm owners. Is that the member's view as well?

● (1135)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his work as chair of our committee. Despite the difficult issues that we take on in the committee I would humbly submit that we are a committee that gets along rather well and does the work that is required, especially when it comes to an issue like public safety, where too often these types of debates we get into this place do not serve what Canadians expect on such a critical issue as their safety and the safety of their communities.

The one big issue is when it comes to this question of what is a burden. There are some aspects about which we still have questions. I asked the minister earlier whether the online system to obtain a permit to transport would be, and not to be facetious about it, as efficient as the Phoenix pay system had been. There are concerns over the roll out of this type of thing. Questions need to be asked about that. For some elements it remains to be seen.

On the other hand, when it comes to things like background checks or point-of-sale record keeping, these are not going to be burdensome. As I said in my speech, background checks over a period longer than the five years prescribed currently in law already happen in a de facto way.

As far as record keeping is concerned, all reputable businesses do this anyway. Any cost associated with any work that is done by the government to make it uniform would not be undue in that regard. If records are already being kept, it would just simply be minor modifications, at least in my humble understanding of the situation.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I always like to be fact and evidence-based in my approach. Therefore, I ended up this past weekend taking my non-restricted and my restricted PAL so I could understand a bit more and then come back to this legislation. To me, it looks like the government has abandoned fact and evidence-based approaches to things.

Last year, there were 1,400 deaths by firearms in Canada and 80% of those were suicides. None of them were related to lawful gun owners taking their gun to a gunsmith or to a gun show.

The authorization to transport today allows people to take their restricted weapons to target practice, to a gunsmith and to a gun show. I am not sure why those would be arbitrarily removed when there is no evidence that there has ever been a problem. Hundreds of thousands of gun owners across Canada are going to then have to call or go online to do this. That is hundreds of thousands of interventions with the government, which is just inefficient when there are no facts and evidence.

Would the member agree that this is really a waste of government resources and people's time?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, the deaths and gang violence the member refers to is exactly why I was so proud that our leader, Jagmeet Singh, wrote to the Prime Minister and extended an olive branch. He said that he and our party were willing to work with the Prime Minister to tackle the different issues in our communities, which were leading to this rise in violence that was so troubling for Canadians.

Going back to the question that was posed on government intervention, and even the question of my Liberal colleague across the way, this is where the fighting, the partisanship and the dialogue of the deaf, to use my colleague's expression, is problematic. We can get so hung up on how these administrative things are unfair. However, then the Conservatives will present an amendment basically trying to remove all criminal charges for what they deem administrative offences. This sounds great on the surface, but this is quote from officials in committee, who listed what kind of offences would not longer be criminally charged. The official said:

> ...the offences that it would propose there be no punishment for include "false statements to procure licences", "false statements to procure customs confirmations"—...trafficking—"tampering with licences", "unauthorized possession of ammunition", "non-compliance with [a] demand to produce [a] firearm", and "contravention of conditions of licences"..."duty to assist inspectors"...

This is why we have to be careful when we talk about administrative offences. While I certainly agree with the sentiment that we need to not have undue administrative burdens on firearms owners, when we think of victims' rights and the different crimes being committed, those administrative offences sound very dangerous to me.

It is important we put these things aside, and not light our hair on fire, sit down and really do the work necessary to ensure public safety.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member is the only member who has raised the issue related to mental health. In fact, a constituent wrote a couple of years ago about the loss of his brother. The brother had access to a gun and had owned a gun licence for many years. He used his gun and committed suicide. In that process, the family inquired about what happened and it wanted answers. Mostly family members wanted to ensure there were proper and more stringent requirements for people with mental health challenges to access guns.

At the time his brother received his gun licence renewal, he had disclosed that he had a mental health issue. At no time was there further follow-up done with respect to that to ensure there was a proper psychological assessment on owning the firearm.

Could the member comment on the ongoing issue of families in this situation, as well as how else we can address these issues to prevent these kinds of tragedies from happening?

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. When the bill was introduced, I had a troubling but important conversation with my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue. She addressed the issue from her perspective as a member representing a rural riding. She is our critic for rural affairs. She explained that there has been an increase in the number of suicides committed using a firearm.

The Association québécoise de prévention du suicide appeared before our committee and gave some very troubling testimony, specifically related to stories similar to the one my colleague just shared with the House. Some people with a history of mental health issues are not being checked properly. They then have access to a firearm that they can use to commit suicide.

What really troubles me is that the association told the committee that, tragically, people who attempt suicide with a firearm are much more likely to be successful than people who use other horrible methods. That is why this matter is so important.

The minister mentioned Anastasia's law, which allows mental health professionals in Quebec to report to authorities any individual with mental health problems who could threaten or cause harm to others. However, victims' groups have told me that there are still problems with that legislation.

I have to admit that I do not know what the perfect solution is. However, the situation is so troubling that it makes me shiver just to talk about it. It is so painful to me. That is why it is so important to put partisanship aside, stop pitting these groups against each other, and understand that these are terrible situations that tear families apart.

We just want to keep Canadians safe. We do not want to use these sorts of issues as a political fundraising tool to help us get re-elected. We just want to do our job so that we can look at cases like the one my colleague just described and understand that there are people out there who are sick. We want to help them. Some of these cases are absolutely horrible. That is all we want to do.

[*English*]

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I represent the riding of New Brunswick Southwest, a riding with many gun owners. We have at least 30 gun clubs. We also have one of the busiest gun dealerships in Canada.

For owners, guns can mean recreation and, sometimes, a way to put food on the table. For the clubs, sports shooting enhances socializing among those who admire craftsmanship in weapons and accuracy in targeting. For the dealerships, guns provide jobs.

I have discussed this legislation with owners, club members, dealers and other citizens all over my riding of New Brunswick Southwest. I also studied and completed a two-day course in firearms handling. I am proud to say that I now hold a firearms possession and acquisition licence.

I also talked with women's organizations, survivors of gun violence and law enforcement officials. I spoke with the Minister of Public Safety. I brought his parliamentary secretary to my riding to speak directly with gun club presidents.

Along the way, I discussed the bill with a good many members opposite. I enjoyed going to a shooting range near Ottawa with the outdoors parliamentary caucus. I have worked hard to fathom out this legislation and what it means for my constituents and other Canadians.

I conclude the following. I support responsible gun owners. I cannot see that Bill C-71 hurts them. Therefore, I support the legislation because it helps protect gun owners, as it does all citizens.

My riding, with its good, responsible gun owners, is considered a safe area. However, Fredericton and Moncton were also traditionally considered safe areas, too. We all remember the headlines about the tragic shootings in Fredericton in August of this year, and in Moncton in June 2014. It can happen so quickly when guns fall into the wrong hands.

Responsible people should be able to keep their guns without undue hindrance, but good people should be able to live freely in cities, towns and villages without undue risk from gun-carrying criminals or people who have threatened or inflicted harm on others.

Let us all remember the shocking number of tormented souls among us who, even though they were showing signs of mental difficulty, got hold of guns and committed suicide. Whether it is mental health, criminality or threatening behaviour, we should be able to double-check for dangers.

The bill is not a new handgun ban. It is not a long gun registry. In large part it is not new. There is a commitment in this legislation not to reinstate the long gun registry. A number of its main features existed before. We lived with those regulations for a long time, and they protected lives.

Then the previous government took them away. Since that time, for various reasons, gun-related deaths in Canada have sharply increased. So has the number of female victims of violent crimes with a firearm present.

Recreating and strengthening sensible legislation can put us back on a better track. For example, authorities will once again be able to require a permit for transporting restricted and prohibited weapons. This does not affect ordinary guns, only those on the higher side of danger.

In another restored regulation, the seller of a firearm will need to verify the purchaser's possession and acquisition licence. This will take a brief phone call. Responsible sellers and buyers will not object to that. Nor will they protest legislation that, as in decades past, required firearms vendors to record what they sold.

The existing law already enables those granting a firearms licence to consider an applicant's criminal offences or mental illness associated with violence or other history of violence, but only for the last five years. Bill C-71 allows taking account of the person's earlier history. That is a sensible change. It derives from a private member's bill put forward by a former Conservative MP.

The legislation incorporates other amendments from other parties in the House.

I hope we can continue to put public safety over partisanship. I am sure none of us want to hurt good people who own guns, but neither do we want guns in the wrong hands to hurt good people.

● (1145)

When all is said and done, this is a good bill for responsible gun owners. At times, strident voices from here and there have tried to paint too many responsible gun owners as villains. Sensible legislation can reassure the public that we are taking reasonable measures to keep guns in good hands and that common sense is prevailing.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Oakville North—Burlington, and I support this proposed legislation.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my area I have a number of farmers who need to use guns. I have hunters and sport shooters. The sport shooters obviously go to the shooting ranges, and so this summer I decided to go to two of the shooting ranges in my area and learn about sport shooting. I have a PAL myself, but did not know much about sport shooting. When I went there, I was impressed with the attention to detail that these clubs give to following the rules, safety guidelines, and being 100% sure that people who use these guns are adequately trained.

They are more than happy to follow the rules and make sure that guns do not fall into the wrong hands and to make sure that the background checks are done. However, they object to something like Bill C-71, which would create an extra burden on legitimate firearms owners. They are happy to accept the burden if they could be assured that it would actually increase public safety, but they are convinced that Bill C-71 is a public relations exercise intended to convince the public that this would somehow increase safety when in reality all it would do is target legitimate gun owners and do nothing against violent criminals and gangs.

● (1150)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Madam Speaker, certainly when we are looking at enhanced background checks, they are critically important. I know from experience the questions that were asked regarding the five-year background check, which I was pleased with. I think that going deeper with the background checks would present an opportunity not only for public safety but also for prevention from self-harm. We heard from other speakers earlier about the risk of suicide and that 80% of suicides are gun related. There are people who should not have guns and, to me, that is one of the most important pieces of the legislation that we are trying to put forward here.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to provide some context for the misinformation in the member's speech, as well as the rampant rhetoric from the other side. First, no evidence has ever been produced, and I have asked for it, on risks associated with the authority to transport, the ATTs. Not one case has ever been presented, and I have asked repeatedly for this information, showing that when law-abiding gun owners transport their firearms from a gun club to gun shop or to sporting competitions, or anywhere else, it has ever presented an issue. Second, the five-year background checks are not limited to five years but currently go the entire history of an individual.

I went to the member's riding in the summer and spoke to the same people she spoke to. I heard very loudly and clearly that they are not in favour of this proposed gun legislation. I wonder what the member has heard from her community at large in regards to Bill C-71 and their disapproval of the proposed legislation, which does not target criminals.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask members to make their point and ask the question, because there is not a lot of time during a five-minute period. Hopefully members will have a chance to make their points when they do their speeches.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest has an opportunity to respond.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Madam Speaker, my only regret when the member was in my riding is that he did not stop in for a visit.

As for what he heard in my riding, I have also heard concerns. Certainly, there is rhetoric that goes back and forth, which is why we need to look at issues as critical as this in the most bipartisan way. That, to me, is what is important.

I have spoken with gun club presidents, and there is a fear of what is next. What I am offering by way of reassurance is that I have done my homework. I went out, I took the firearms course and did my licensing. I talk with the largest gun dealer in Atlantic Canada every single week. I know their concerns. I have asked those questions, and I have put them forward to the minister. I think that is an important part of being a parliamentarian. However, I do feel assured in looking at the proposed legislation that it would not affect the average gun owner in my riding, whom I have the utmost respect for.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I recognize the next speaker, I just want to remind members that in the five-minute question and comment period, their preambles could be shorter. The individual should have the opportunity within one minute to say what he or she has to say and ask the question to allow other people to ask questions.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to participate in this debate on Bill C-71. The bill comes at a time when trends relating to violent firearms crime are rising at an alarming rate, making it crucial for all members of the House to support this legislation. The bill also deals with aspects of gun violence that are often overlooked: gender-based gun violence and suicide.

As legislators, we must do more than simply acknowledge a problem. We are here to pass legislation that will help to address those problems. Bill C-71's balanced and practical reforms would do just that. One of the aspects of this bill that I am proudest of is the introduction of mandatory life-history background checks that would expand the current timeline for background checks from five years to life.

I am pleased to see that the government has advanced the amendment that I made to Bill C-71 in committee, which should help to address the issue of intimate partner violence and suicide involving a firearm. The Toronto Star published an editorial this week entitled, "Gun control is a women's issue", which stated that "Access to a firearm by an intimate partner increases the likelihood of femicide by 500 per cent." The amendment puts a greater focus on intimate partner violence, and for the first time would explicitly require the chief firearms officer to look at a firearms licence applicant's online behaviour for signs of violence. I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her assistance with this amendment. Public online behaviour is a red flag for violent behaviour. The members of the public safety committee clearly agreed, as the enhanced background check amendment I just mentioned passed, although some members of the Conservative Party abstained.

Yesterday I watched the Leader of the Opposition stand with the member for Lethbridge, his status of women critic, and state that he would repeal Bill C-71. He would repeal enhanced background checks and protections for women; he would repeal a provision in Bill C-71 that firearms are forfeited to the Crown when the courts prohibit firearms ownership. Instead, the Leader of the Opposition would support these firearms being given to a friend or family member who has a firearms licence.

Another amendment that I was pleased to see passed unanimously by the committee was put forward by the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, which read, "For greater certainty, nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to permit or require the registration of non-restricted firearms." This is an important amendment because, as we know, during the election campaign the Prime Minister promised to deliver effective, common sense firearms legislation and also promised that we would not bring back the long-gun registry, and we have not. The amendment put forward by the Conservatives would ensure that every Canadian who read Bill C-71 could see that it clearly is not a long-gun registry. That sentiment was echoed by the Conservative member for Red Deer—Lacombe, who later that day told the committee, "everybody at this table agrees that this is not a registry". The Leader of the Opposition should perhaps consult with the members of his party sitting on the committee.

Other than that one amendment, the Conservative members put forward amendments that could not be supported. The vast majority of their amendments were nonsensical. Let me provide just one example of a Conservative amendment. Conservative amendment 40.2 read:

> The act is amended by adding the following after section 11:
>
> 112. Despite sections 109 and 111, no person guilty of an offence set out in those sections is liable to imprisonment if, in the commission of the offence, the person causes no bodily harm to another person.

Let us see what kinds of offences are referred to in sections 109 and 111 of the Firearms Act, which the Conservatives would not like to see punished. One of those offences is deliberately lying in order to get a firearms licence. The law says that one knowingly has to mislead in order to be convicted. The Conservatives wanted there to be no punishment for that. Another one is tampering with a firearms licence or registration certificate, or operating an illegal firing range. The Conservatives wanted no punishment for that. Another is how to store prohibited weapons. The Conservatives wanted to remove the penalties for people who just leave a fully loaded automatic handgun sitting around. The Conservatives also wanted to remove the penalties for lying to a customs officer about a firearm or for falsifying a customs officer's confirmation document, in other words weapons trafficking. They wanted to remove the penalties for cross-border weapons trafficking.

● (1155)

What is worse, when the Conservatives asked an official from the Department of Justice during the meeting about the effect of the amendment, he told them very clearly that the amendment would remove the punishment for all of these offences, including weapons trafficking, and they still voted for it. We, of course, defeated the amendment.

My colleagues in the chamber might think that maybe the Conservatives went a little bit rogue in introducing this amendment at committee. In fact, this amendment was introduced deliberately. The amendment was drawn directly from the leadership platform of the leader of the Conservative Party, a platform that happened to be taken down from the Internet just hours after he became the Conservative Party leader.

Let us return to the committee deliberations. The Conservative member for Red Deer—Lacombe told the committee members that this amendment was about helping prevent people from becoming paper criminals. Specifically he said that "what I'm proposing—and I'm hoping my colleagues will see it—is that in the event that somebody finds themself offside with the law in the sense that it's only a paper crime...".

Let me read from page 10 of the leader of the Conservative Party's leadership platform in which he made seven distinct promises on firearms. The sixth commitment was to "Decriminalize administrative infractions", which he said were "a complete waste of government and police resources."

Anyone who has been around this place have heard Conservative MPs talk about how people should not become paper criminals for having committed an administrative infraction. Conservative amendment 40.2 may seem nonsensical to most people. Why would anybody remove penalties for people who lie to customs officials to traffic weapons into our country? However, it was in the platform of the leader of the Conservative Party and the Conservative members of the committee were merely trying to implement what their leader had promised Conservative party members in order to win the leadership of the party. As I said, Canadians should be very concerned about this.

The Conservative Party leader's other platform commitments included things like eliminating the prohibition against handgun magazines that can hold more than 10 bullets. What transpired at committee shows that he intends to keep his leadership election promises. Indeed, just yesterday, the Conservative Party leader held a press conference, standing alongside one of my Conservative colleagues on the status for women committee, the member for Lethbridge. At it he vowed to repeal this legislation should Canadians choose to elect a Conservative government in 2019. Personally, I find it disturbing that the member for Lethbridge, who is also the status of women critic for the official opposition, would support repealing a bill that strengthens protections for survivors of domestic violence.

On this side of the House we do believe that someone who deliberately lies to get a firearms licence should face a penalty. We believe that someone operating an illegal firing range should be punished, not only because it is dangerous but also because it takes business away from properly licensed owners of legitimate shooting ranges. We certainly believe that you should not be able to lie to a customs official to traffic weapons across the border and get away with it, and we believe that women deserve protections.

In fact, coercive control, such as when a man uses a gun to control women without ever pulling the trigger, is real and happening right now. An Oakville resident sent me a note that states, "let me just say that you can endure the physical and emotional abuse but when he pulls out a double barrel shotgun, loads it and tells you he is going to kill you then you know true terror! Thank you for looking out for the victims before they become statistics."

Our government is speaking out for women like this, while the Conservatives continue to ignore them. We are taking into account domestic violence and suicide when we are looking at Bill C-71 and not ignoring those important issues for Canadians. That is why I encourage all of my colleagues in the House to support this bill at third reading

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, who sits on the same committee as I do, is making a lot of outrageous statements today. What she is saying is completely inconsistent with the will and actions of the Conservative Party. First, with regard to her statement that the Conservatives want to repeal enhanced background checks, I would like to say that, on the contrary, we voted in favour of them in committee. That is one thing about the bill that we like and that we would keep in the new law we would create.

The penalties handed down to those who forget to renew their licences have absolutely nothing to do with cross-border weapons trafficking.

Why is my colleague confusing that with the existing Customs Act, which we strongly support?

As I mentioned in my speech, when the Conservatives were in office, we passed many bills to strengthen the law against people who use firearms illegally.

Why is my colleague making false statements and trying to portray us in a false light?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the question was. However, I do recall that when I brought up this amendment in the House back in June, the member opposite did not even remember introducing it.

Hopefully, my colleague remembers the government official looking at all three Conservative members of the committee and saying that the inclusion of that amendment would, in fact, include trafficking in weapons. They still chose to vote in favour of their amendment. None of us did on this side of the House, nor did the NDP members, because we knew that there need to be penalties for trafficking, for lying to customs officers and other important issues, which would have been removed from Bill C-71.

● (1205)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, hunting is part of who we are and part of our culture. I used to be the regional manager for the ministry of environment responsible for fish and wildlife regulations in my part of British Columbia. It is very much part of who we are, and I would have a very difficult time supporting any bill that would add to the administrative burden or actual costs for the hunting public. On September 1, bow hunting begins, and September 10 is rifle season. I want to know, in the opinion of my colleague across the floor, if this bill would add any undue administrative burden or new costs for hunters heading out the door in the average hunting season, which started on September 10.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, many of my colleagues are hunters and very aware of the importance that hunters place on hunting. With this legislation, we are putting in place common-sense proposals that would ensure hunters can continue to hunt and that proper legislative controls exist. There will not be additional costs. We need regulations for firearms. I know the member and law-abiding firearms owners agree that there need to be restrictions on firearms. They own guns and are quite prepared to comply with the law.

I can assure my colleague that in fact this legislation would provide protections for those people I mentioned, while, at the same time, respecting hunters, target shooters, those who go to shooting ranges and are law-abiding firearms owners.

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Calgary Centre has seen an increase in gun violence and overall in the city over the course of the last three years. Why do you think that Conservatives only want to do something after a crime is committed? Why not be proactive, like we are in this legislation, with doing background checks for more than five years, having to show a licence before purchasing a gun, those types of things? You brought forward an amendment to protect women having had crimes perpetrated on them. Could you expand a little on that scenario that I see before us?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure the hon. member did not mean that I would answer the question, but the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington. I will allow her to answer the question, but I want to remind all members to go through the Chair.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, through you, I honestly do not know. There are some very strong amendments to this bill, ones that I am extremely proud of. I have heard from women's organizations, not only in my riding but across the country, that support the changes in the bill, so I guess we would have to ask our Conservative colleagues why they do not want to support those changes.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to outline the many and significant failures that exist in Bill C-71.

First, I would again like to bring up that the whole debate is about a bill that has questionable evidence attached to it, and we have yet to hear from the minister who is responsible for the RCMP after they were found in contempt of Parliament. While he may ignore members of Parliament, thousands of law-abiding Canadians, the Assembly of First Nations, and the police, I would like to think that a censure from this House and the Speaker would result in some action. However, that has yet to occur.

On June 19, in his ruling on the RCMP's implementation of Bill C-71, the Speaker stated:

> the vast majority of the information was presented as though the provisions will definitively be coming into effect or are already the law of the land. Nowhere did I find any indication [that] the bill was...in committee and was not yet enacted law.

The Speaker further added:

> The work of members as legislators is fundamental and any hint or suggestion of this parliamentary role and authority being bypassed or usurped is not acceptable.

The RCMP presumed the will of Parliament, assumed that the bill would pass, and attempted to enforce the new rules before decisions came from committee, the House or the Senate.

While addressing his attempt to undermine Canada's democracy, the Minister of Public Safety continued to pass the bill based on false information, despite the concerns of millions of Canadians and many members of Parliament. These concerns were raised by Conservative members on this side of the House, expert testimony, written submissions, the media, my own consultations across the country, and ultimately confirmed by Liberal MPs on the committee. This is bad legislation, which was flawed from its start, and was based on misleading information that attempted to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians.

The Minister of Public Safety has made questionable comments regarding this bill. Recently in the House of Commons, the minister tabled a list of the organizations that were formerly consulted on Bill C-71. To date, seven of those individuals or organizations have come forward to say that they were not consulted. The Assembly of First Nations, for example, stated that it was not consulted and that this legislation is an infringement on treaty rights.

The Liberal MP for Ajax, who was the parliamentary secretary at the time, made the outright claim that national consultations were held. He stated in this House that there were "discussions in every corner of this country, including with first nations chiefs, chiefs of police, the firearms community, and others..". The minister has never set foot in any of my communities to hold consultations.

From my own consultations with Canadians across the country, I can say that they are very concerned. There is nothing in his bill that deals with criminals, gang violence or illegal firearms. There are only more rules for law-abiding Canadians, and they are very angry about that.

The consultations, if they did happen, were done poorly. As one stakeholder told me, "If I was consulted, I think I would know about it."

In the height of the irony, the minister held a summit on gangs and guns. It was clear that the issue brought forward by those experts was not around law-abiding gun owners; rather, it was about organized crime, gangs and violent criminals. Not only did the Liberals not listen to those who were impacted by the bill, they almost entirely ignored what experts said was the problem in Canada, which is gangs, organized crime and gun violence.

Experts from across the country told us about a whole host of crime issues at that summit. They discussed illegal firearms, primarily handguns, straw purchases, stealth shipping and gangs. Still, the minister came to the committee of public safety and national security with false and inaccurate information.

He appeared before the comm..ittee and stated:

> While crime rates in Canada overall have been on the decline, thankfully, for decades, the rate of gun violence has been going up in recent years. Between 2013 and 2016 the number of...incidents involving firearms rose by 30%. Gun homicides in that period went up by two-thirds. Intimate partner and gender-based violence involving firearms was up by one-third. Gang-related homicides, most of which involve guns, were up by two-thirds. Break-ins for the purpose of the stealing of firearms were up by 56% between 2013 and 2016, and by a whopping 865% since the year 2008.

It sounds like we had a real crisis. However, we should look at what experts said about his misrepresentation of the information.

Solomon Friedman, of the Criminal Lawyers' Association, stated:

> The Criminal Lawyers' Association supports criminal law reform that is modest, fundamentally rational, and supported by objective evidence. On each of these measures, Bill C-71, in our view, fails to meet the mark.
>
> First, the proposed reforms in Bill C-71 are unsupported by the evidence. In fact, in presenting its rationale for this bill, the government has misrepresented the objective statistical data to create the appearance of a problem that simply does not exist. As a society, we are the poorer for it when government promotes criminal legislation on a misunderstanding or, worse yet, a willful manipulation of what it claims is empirical evidence.

● (1210)

> On May 8, 2018, the honourable Minister of Public Safety...told this committee that between 2013 and 2016, the number of criminal incidents involving firearms rose by 30%. Gun homicides in that period went up by two-thirds. Those numbers are alarming. They give the clear impression that gun crime and homicide by firearm specifically are a rampant and increasing problem in our society.

Mr. Solomon went on to suggest that:

> With the greatest of respect to the minister, that is simply not the case. The year 2013, the starting point for the purported trend, was not chosen at random. As we now know, 2013 [was] a statistical aberration in terms of violent crime and homicide in Canada. [2013] saw the lowest rate of [violent crime] in Canada in 50 years. To put that in perspective, every single year since 1966 has been worse than 2013, and it's not surprising that the three years following 2013 would be worse, as well.
>
> The truth of the matter is homicide by firearm has, in fact, been steadily declining in Canada since the mid-1970s, and when an appropriate sample size is taken, the alarming trend that the minister purported to identify is seen for what it is: a selective manipulation of statistical data. The rate of homicide by firearm, when viewed over a [more] reasonable sample size, has remained relatively stable. In fact, it was slightly lower in 2016 than it was 10 years earlier, in 2006.

Here we have a criminal defence lawyer destroying the highly questionable evidence provided by the minister. That is shocking, disappointing, and it should be very alarming to Canadians.

The minister also said that there has been an 865% increase in break and enters dealing with firearms since 2008. It is an interesting statistic. It is true, but what the minister failed to identify is that in 2008, the Conservatives brought in a law that if someone breaks in and steals a firearm, it is a specific offence. It had never occurred before. It was a break, enter and theft before. That is how it was covered off. Therefore, we never had a new offence occurring. The minister had misleading information again.

Additionally, we heard from Dr. Gary Mauser at committee, but the information, the minister presented as facts. He said that 121 of the 141 increased firearm-related homicides were directly related to gangs in cities. The rate of violence in Canada is because there are more gangs and gang-related shootings. Surprisingly, the word "gangs" appears nowhere in the bill. It appears that the minister's increasing statistics on gun violence are selective use of figures and wrongfully attributed to licensed law-abiding gun owners.

What happens when a professor from a trustworthy Canadian university provides evidence that is contrary to the government's flawed legislation and position? The Liberals do what they always do; they call into question their credibility. The reality is that the Canadians right across the country are rightfully beginning to question the credibility of the Liberal government.

The minister went on to say at committee:

> Right now, when a person applies for a licence, there's a mandatory look back over the immediately preceding five years to see whether they have in that period of time been engaged in any violent behaviour or been treated for a mental illness associated with violence. Bill C-71 will remove that five-year limitation so that a person's entire record will be taken into account. That will help ensure, quite simply, that people with a history of violence do not get guns.

Again, this is an inaccurate statement. The minister's own officials from the Canadian firearms program, and the RCMP, confirmed that criminal background checks were never limited and are never limited to five years; any criminal history is taken into account, no matter how old it is. Either the minister is ignoring his own experts, or he is presenting misleading information to justify a pointless piece of legislation.

The minister went on to say at committee:

> The legislation will also help ensure that people who acquire firearms are actually licensed to own them. Since 2012, all that has been required in this regard at the time of a sale is that the vendor have "no reason to believe" that the purchaser is not licensed. [...] Vendors often check anyway, but they are not, in fact, required to do so.

Again, that statement is blatantly false. Legal experts at committee told us the following:

> any violation, no matter how minor or technical, engages the criminal law process. [...] Indeed, this legislation creates new criminal offences where none were needed. For example Bill C-71 will make it an offence for a firearm owner to transfer a firearm—meaning to give, sell, or barter—to another person without first obtaining a reference number from the registrar of firearms. Let me be clear: It is already a criminal offence to transfer a firearm to an individual who is not authorized to possess it.

● (1215)

> Section 101 of the Criminal Code prohibits that precise conduct. It is punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment....

The government says that the new provisions under Bill C-71 are required to ensure that firearms are not transferred without lawful authority. Not surprisingly, the existing offence under section 101 is entitled "Transfer without authority". However, under Bill C-71, one law-abiding licensed firearm owner can transfer a firearm to another law-abiding licensed firearm owner and still commit a criminal offence if the government is not duly notified. This does nothing more than create another trap for the unwary, a trap that carries with it criminal consequences. For what? It is not for actual public safety, but for the appearance of public safety.

It is clear to me the minister knew that what he was saying was inaccurate and he likely knew his bill would do nothing for public safety. He is not alone in misleading and false statements. The Prime Minister himself tweeted out early on in the introduction of Bill C-71, "We're also introducing stronger and more rigorous background checks on gun sales. And if you want to buy a gun, by law you'll have to show a license at the point of purchase. Right now that's not a requirement." Really? That is exactly what the law is now, so I do not know where the Prime Minister and the minister are getting their information. Obviously, it is not factual.

In the fall of 2017, the Minister of Public Safety made an announcement in Surrey, B.C., where there is a real gun problem. Gun violence and shootings there are a regular occurrence. Police in communities across the country need more help to tackle these criminals. He announced $327 million in funding to combat guns and gangs, a great announcement, and no doubt one that would help the Liberal MP for South Surrey—White Rock secure his seat, as it was made during a by-election. Canadians should understand though that to date, not one dime has moved on that funding and it will take a full two years for the Liberals to make that funding available to police.

Since that announcement, the Liberals have tabled Bill C-71, have pushed the House by limiting debate and testimony, and are ramming it though with almost no amendments, despite nearly every witness saying it is not a good bill.

It is no surprise that the Liberal MPs on the committee were expected to limit debate as much as possible. In fact, we had more testimony from department officials, 21 to be exact, than from Canadians and stakeholder groups. There were over 100 briefs submitted to committee from organizations and people who could not appear, who were trying to show that law-abiding firearm owners were not the problem. In fact, my office received 30 submissions after committee members were required to submit its amendments. That means dozens of organizations and individuals who put time and effort into their briefs received no consideration in this debate.

Let us summarize some of the key issues I have heard from Canadians all across the country, including the over 86,000 who signed the petition that was presented yesterday opposed to Bill C-71. First, the bill does nothing to tackle gun and gang crime. Criminals do not follow the law and do not register their guns. Second, the claims by the minister, his parliamentary secretary, the Prime Minister and the rest of the Liberals that the bill would go after criminals while respecting firearm owners are inaccurate and, in fact, insulting to millions of Canadians. Third, the Liberals will not call this a gun registry. The rest of the country thinks it is a gun registry. I guess we will leave it to Canadians to decide in the 2019 election.

Finally, we saw what Liberal MPs thought of Bill C-71 when they finished the bill's discussion at committee. Moments after ratifying the legislation at committee, Liberal MPs were calling for a study on issues raised by witnesses. They called on the minister to address real issues facing illegal firearms getting into the hands of criminals and administrative and process issues resulting in criminals getting firearm licences. They called for more statistics and research into gun violence and the criminal acquisition of firearms. Those are great issues, and they certainly are a lot more productive than what was in Bill C-71 that the minister put forward. However, none of them had the courage during the debate on Bill C-71 to bring those issues forward at the time we had a chance to change the legislation.

● (1220)

This summer, after more gang shootings, will the government now take a hard look at the real issues, the evidence and the problem? Is the new minister empowered to go after criminals and illegal weapons and repair the relationship with millions of law-abiding Canadians? Sadly, the answer is no. Rather, the Liberals are now repeating their previous mistakes with an investigation into a handgun ban. While I understand that the government prefers to look like it is doing something as opposed to actually addressing the issues, Canadians deserve better.

A Canadian Press article highlighted the government's justification for going after law-abiding gun owners, claiming a surge in crime guns, suggesting about one-half of crime guns in Toronto originated from lawful licensed gun owners. However, the comments and the article were lacking in detail and statistical evidence and had many experts and advocates questioning those results.

Albertan Dennis Young, a former RCMP officer and a public servant, submitted a freedom of information request to obtain actual Toronto Police Service stats. Well, guess what: Those stats show a very different reality. The number of crime guns seized was on a downward trend over the last 10 years. The number of domestically sourced firearms was down over the last 10 years. There was no surge, as the minister and others have said. As noted by the media outlets, the overall trend for gun crimes in Toronto is down. Therefore, the crisis is more manufactured than based on fact.

The number of firearms being traced back to their origins is very small, too small for us to have good information, and shows that the government is failing Canadians on public safety if police do not have the resources necessary to trace back the firearms that they seize to their origins.

To quote a Global News commentary about the handgun ban:

> Politicians, including the Prime Minister and Toronto Mayor John Tory, who once strongly opposed a ban on handguns, are now either considering or actively calling for one. This would be a major change to the Criminal Code involving potentially billions of dollars in private property. It is not an exaggeration to say the CP report is a key part of this debate.
>
> Do our political leaders know they're reacting to a story with bad information? Perhaps the more depressing question is whether they'd care if they did.

Perhaps the Liberals are interested in listening to what senior and experienced law enforcement officials are saying.

Mike McCormack from the Toronto Police Association said this in referring to a handgun ban:

> There's no way in my world or any world I know that this would have an impact on somebody who's going to go out and buy an illegal gun and use it to kill another person....

The newly minted commissioner, Brenda Lucki, appointed by the very minister in charge of this bill and who we would like to assume he counts on for advice, has no proof that a handgun ban does anything to protect people. She said, "I'm not sure if a complete ban is the answer or tweaking the legislation."

The Ontario Provincial Police's former chief said:

> It would be unmanageable and unfair to the majority of handgun owners who obey the law and always use their guns safely. Let's effectively deal with the criminals that do not obey the current criminal law.

In Surrey, B.C., a former police officer running for city council indicated that from his experience "a ban would have little effect to decrease gang violence in our community."

Pointing out that the Liberal plan completely lacks any credibility does not mean we on this side do not see the issues that we face in this country. However, the government's practice of blaming hunters and farmers for the criminal actions of gangs and criminals is wrong. It is morally wrong and it is factually wrong.

It is time that the Liberal government started taking public safety and the government's duty to protect Canadians seriously. Canada has real problems. Criminals are the centre of our gun violence problems, not hunters, not sports shooters, not farmers.

Canadians deserve a government that supports all law-abiding Canadians. The countdown is on to the 2019 election. Canadians are eager for a change to a Conservative government. In fact, many are suggesting that the Liberal government lacks the moral authority to govern. It is time for Canadians to come before partisan talking points. It is time to get back to dealing with the real issues in this country.

● (1225)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I get the overall impression that my hon. colleague is not overly enthusiastic about Bill C-71. Nevertheless, he does make a valid contribution at committee and I always appreciate his interventions there.

The member had a multitude of points but I am only going to pick up on two.

The first one has to do with the five-year limitation, which he argues is unnecessary because it already happens and it is a lifetime inquiry. I therefore would ask the hon. member why a former Conservative colleague of his, a former minister in fact, felt compelled to introduce Bill C-42, which Bill C-71 picks up on and which directly addresses the issue of lifting the five-year limitation?

The second point has to do with licence verification, which the member repeatedly said always happens, yet Bill C-42 refers to where the transferor has no reason to believe that the transferee is not authorized to acquire and possess that kind of firearm. In other words, all that has to be established is the threshold of no reason to believe. A valid licence does not have to be produced.

I would be interested in my hon. colleague's comments on his former colleague's Bill C-42, which was Conservative legislation.

● (1230)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I certainly defer to the wisdom and the experience of my colleague across the way on many aspects in our committee. We do not agree on all of them, but he does show his patience with me on many occasions.

In response to his question, I am not familiar with the member he referred to or the bill exactly but my information comes from conversations directly with those in the Canadian firearms program, as well as the RCMP. They have confirmed that currently, background checks are not limited to five years. The five years has to do with when an individual reapplies for a PAL and that is the five-year window, because that individual is already checked every day according to our police records system.

With respect to the ability or the inability of vendors or individuals to have the impression that someone has a firearms licence, currently in the legislation before Bill C-71 came along, section 101 clearly identifies that the transfer of a firearm without authority carries a five-year penalty. It is very clear in that legislation that it is illegal to transfer a firearm to anyone, either as a private gun owner or a gun shop, who does not have a PAL. That is in legislation today. Bill C-71 would not change any of that.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner on his distinguished 35-year career in the Medicine Hat police department. He has seen a lot on the streets not only in Medicine Hat but certainly in Alberta and the whole country. I saw that first hand when the member came to my riding a couple of weeks ago. He is very respected in the police community nationwide. We had a meeting in Saskatoon with a number of police officers and they spoke glowingly about the member, who now represents Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

I want to thank him for his work on this file and I want to thank him for a number of reasons. First, I would like to thank him for having consultations not only in Alberta and Saskatchewan but also for when he visited Saskatoon—Grasswood. He has been going coast to coast talking to citizens in this country about Bill C-71.

While he was in Saskatoon, we held a very successful town hall. I would like to know what message he heard from my constituents and what feedback he would like to share in the House of Commons today.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his hospitality when I was in Saskatoon. What is unique about each community and region of our country is that they have unique crime issues and specifics around gun and gang violence. In the town hall we had in Saskatoon, the message was very loud and clear from some very experienced and learned individuals on this legislation that they felt targeted. They felt the provisions in this bill, as proposed and as amended, would not deal with the issues they and their community are facing with respect to gun and gang violence. They feel they bear the brunt of it because they are easier targets. They already follow the rules and the legislation in place, and they feel as if they are the ones who are being targeted by this legislation. Quite frankly, they are disappointed and angered at the fact that there is so much effort being put into making sure that those who already follow the rules are being targeted, while those who do not are not even mentioned in this legislation.

● (1235)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ontario coroner's death review panel said that 26% of women who were killed by their partner were killed using a firearm. In Oakville North—Burlington in January of this year, a woman was shot and killed by her partner.

The member stated that this legislation would do "nothing for public safety" and that we are not taking our "duty to protect Canadians seriously". I would like to know why the provision of Bill C-71 that would enhance the safety of women in their homes is not included in the definition of public safety?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to those cases directly because I am not aware of them. Were they individuals who had lawful authority to have a firearm? That is the question I would have in that case.

Second, of course the issue of intimate partner violence is an issue in this country that needs to be taken seriously. Having a small line or identifier in bad legislation does not change the fact that we are not going to be able to prevent that. We need a different, better, more comprehensive understanding of what the issues are.

I applaud the member opposite for the motion she put forward after the fact in order to deal with some of the issues we are having in this country not addressed in Bill C-71. I am just disappointed those issues were not addressed during the opportunity we had to address them. Changes that would have impacted positively on public safety could have been made to Bill C-71 when we had the chance.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I raised the issue earlier around individuals with mental health challenges and their access to guns. For some people, after many years of owning a gun a tragedy occurs whereby the person commits suicide. The regulations and policies in place do not adequately deal with that situation. Could the member comment on that, as well as how we can bring in initiatives to prevent, as much as is possible, these tragedies from occurring?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, mental health concerns are huge in this country and are certainly impacted when access to firearms is in play. We need tighter scrutiny around that. We agree that we need changes. The comments that were made before, about our leader suggesting yesterday that we are going to be repealing Bill C-71 when we form government in 2019, are accurate. However, what was not mentioned was that as recently as this morning, we are talking about some of the ways that needs to be changed. We are talking about individuals who pose a risk. We need to ensure they no longer have access to firearms, or that we would deal with them in a way that currently does not exist in legislation and certainly is void in Bill C-71. It is an issue of public safety that we have to take seriously.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind hon. members that when referring to someone in the chamber, we refer to them by their riding or by their position. I know that after a summer off, things get forgotten. Therefore, I would remind everyone that, when giving their speech, they should refer to a member by their position or riding and not at all by their name.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough Centre.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

I rise today to speak on C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms.

It is appropriate that this is the topic of my first speech following my return from medical leave. While I was away, a series of unfortunate and sad acts of violence involving firearms across Toronto have driven home to our community the cost of firearms violence, how they ripple across the community beyond just the victims and their loved ones, and the need for new ideas and a new approach to combatting firearms violence.

We can talk about statistics. I can tell members how, in 2016, there were 223 firearms-related homicides in Canada, which is a 23% increase from 2015 and the highest rate since 2005. Between 2013 and 2016, the number of female intimate-partner violence victims when a firearm was present during the incident increased from 447 to 586. However, statistics, while important for context, cannot illustrate the emotional, physical and psychological toll these acts of violence leave in their wake.

I would like to highlight three recent acts of firearms violence that have shaken my own community of Scarborough Centre in recent months. In fact, two incidents have taken place in the last two weeks, within days of one another.

Last Friday night, a 16-year-old boy was shot and died on Bellamy Road North. This was not a case of being in a dangerous area late at night. He was in front of an apartment building in the early evening. Police responded to reports of gunshots around 6:45 p.m. Neighbours say that he was a good kid and not involved in any bad activities. Perhaps it was a case of mistaken identity. This young man who lost his life at the age of 16 will never finish high school, never have the chance to go to college or university, and never have the chance to pursue his dreams. He was Toronto's 77th homicide victim of the year, but behind that statistic is a life that will never be.

Just a little more than a week earlier, on September 4, the day our kids went back to school after Labour Day, a woman's life was forever changed on a Tuesday evening in her own home on Birchmount Road near Ellesmere Road. Emergency crews were called to a basement apartment in a private residence just after 10 p. m. to find a woman believed to be in her fifties with a gunshot-related injury. There was no one around, and because of her injuries, she was unable to communicate to the responding officers what had happened. She had been shot in the neck. Thanks to the efforts of the first responders and medical professionals at a nearby trauma centre, she will survive, but she has suffered life-altering injuries and could be left paralyzed. Another life has been dramatically changed by an act of firearms violence.

In May, there was another incident of senseless gun violence that hit close to home. It happened next door in Scarborough—Guildwood but the victim and his family are from Scarborough Centre. On May 21, around 3 a.m., an 18-year-old was shot dead and a 17-year-old suffered life-altering injuries when they were shot in their car in the Scarborough Golf Club Road area near Ellesmere Road. Neighbours were shocked, as they call it a quiet neighbourhood. Police say they believe it was a targeted shooting. The 18-year-old victim was Mohammed Gharda. He was Toronto's 30th homicide of the year. The survivor's family has asked that his name not be released. I visited him and his family at Sunnybrook's trauma centre in the days following the incident. He faces a long and difficult road to recovery and has lost his vision in one eye.

These are just three incidents out of many that have touched my community and have touched Toronto. There have been too many others. Between the incident in May and the one last week, 47 more people were murdered in Toronto.

● (1240)

As a mother of two young men now attending university, I think of how I would react if I got that phone call, if the promise their lives hold and the dreams my husband and I have for them were suddenly extinguished, just another statistic. Behind every number is a story: a grieving family, a life snuffed out. Too many of the victims are youth, with their whole lives ahead of them: future teachers, future doctors, future scientists. Who knows what they could have accomplished, what they could have achieved and what they could have contributed to our communities and the world?

I would consider Bill C-71, which we are debating today, to be a common-sense bill. It is a first step that contains a number of provisions related to firearms safety that certainly make sense to me and are worthy of our consideration and support. It is not our intention in any way to penalize law-abiding firearms owners, but merely to put in place regulation and policy that help ensure only law-abiding citizens have access to firearms and that they use them in a responsible manner. As with many other things in our society, it is about balancing rights and responsibilities and the interests of public safety.

With enhanced background checks, for example, we are making sure only responsible people can become firearms owners. Currently, only the last five years can be considered while making a decision to grant a firearms licence. We will remove that five-year limitation so that if a person has committed one of several listed criminal offences, is being treated for mental illness associated with violence or has a history of violent behaviour, that information can be considered. I find that hard to argue with. We should be diligent when considering who can and will be a responsible firearms owner.

With Bill C-71, we are also seeking to close a loophole around licence verifications. Before 2015, if individuals or retailers were selling firearms, they had to verify the purchaser had a valid possession and acquisition licence, or PAL. Basically, they had to make sure they were legally licensed to own firearms. The last government changed that to, "the transferor has no reason to believe that the transferee is not authorized to acquire and possess that kind of firearm." Basically, they were asked to take the person's word for it. That is fine if the buyer is indeed a responsible and licensed firearms owner, but, as we know, irresponsible people try to get their hands on firearms, too. By returning to the pre-2015 system, sellers will need to make a call to the firearms registrar to verify the seller's PAL. It will take less than five minutes, cost nothing to the seller or the buyer and will close one loophole that could allow firearms to enter the wrong hands.

We are also strengthening requirements for vendor record-keeping. Most vendors already track sales information, but there is no requirement that they do so. Provincial governments used to require record-keeping as a condition of obtaining a licence to sell firearms, but the last government prohibited them from making that a requirement of licence in 2011. We will again make record-keeping a federal requirement. It is important to note that this information will not be available to police except through a court-ordered search warrant obtained in support of an active investigation. I think we can trust our courts to make the right decisions. I would note that this is also federal policy in the United States.

Finally, another provision I would like to highlight is weapons classification. The Conservative government took the decision-making ability for firearms classification decisions away from the experts at the RCMP and, instead, turned it over to the federal cabinet. Let me be clear that I have great faith in my capable colleagues who serve Her Majesty in cabinet. However, they are not firearms experts and I do not think such decisions should be made by a group subject to political whims and pressure. By returning this classification authority to the RCMP to operate based on law passed by the people's elected representatives in this Parliament, we are removing political interference from the equation and ensuring that evidence-based decisions are made by independent experts.

As I said earlier, I believe Bill C-71 is an important first step in common-sense firearms safety and I will be supporting it, but I believe we need to do more. My constituents in Scarborough Centre want us to do more. We need to look at why so many young people turn to violence. Too many people have lost their lives to firearms violence. I think we can and must do better, we can and must do more.

● (1245)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our colleague for her speech today, especially the part where she described a number of scenarios where people's lives were taken.

Any senseless gun violence is a terrible thing, as everyone in this House agrees. However, the unfortunate thing here is that this legislation is completely weak in dealing with that particular issue. We keep hearing the terms "gangs" and "crime with guns" coming from the mouths of the members here, but this legislation does nothing to deal with that. It is like taking a fly swatter to kill an elephant, and this elephant is huge in our society.

Therefore, we have deep concern on this side of the floor about dealing with gang violence and gun violence, which brings me to this point: If the member and her colleagues are truly concerned about this, why then are they prepared to remove penalties for serious crimes with Bill C-75, such as participating in an organized crime, or getting material benefits from human trafficking, or abducting a person under the age of 14?

These are serious crimes, often using guns and gangs, yet that members on that side of the floor appear prepared to remove serious penalties to the point where they could be as low as a fine. How can this be a reasonable behaviour when they are prepared to basically penalize law-abiding gun owners with more red tape?

Some of the smaller issues in this bill are good, but the majority of the bill is useless and would do nothing but create more bureaucracy in the form of a registry. It would do nothing about these issues, which they are prepared to turn a blind eye to.

●(1250)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to let the hon. member know is that this is not a gun registry. Our Prime Minister has been very clear. This was standard practice before gun registry. Responsible retailers are already doing this anyway, and the police can access the information only with court orders for an ongoing police investigation. These are common-sense changes, which we are making to ensure that the guns are taken off the streets. We are investing $327 million over five years and $100 million annually thereafter in new funding for initiatives to reduce gun crime and criminal gang violence.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by telling my colleague that I was touched by the stories she shared. These were particularly sad stories. I think that everyone is worried about gun violence.

I also want to tell my colleague that it is sometimes a bit difficult to grasp the distinctions between firearms obtained legally or illegally, and particularly between unrestricted, restricted or prohibited firearms.

Unfortunately, the bill will have no effect on illegal firearms. It will have no effect on organized crime or smuggling. It will make administrative changes to how people may legally obtain firearms. The majority of the crimes the member talked about were mostly likely committed with illegal firearms that were acquired through organized crime, for example.

We do not want to confuse people or make them fear legislation that, in reality, does not address a problem.

Has the member talked to the new minister about how to address violence committed with illegal guns? Is the minister available to hear from opposition members who have suggestions?

[*English*]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, we definitely need to do more, and we need to look at why so many young people turn to violence. I am proud that our Prime Minister agrees that we need to do more. That is why he has appointed my colleague from Scarborough Southwest as the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, and told him to put everything on the table when it comes to action to address this violence. I will read from the minister's mandate letter:

> You should lead an examination of a full ban on handguns and assault weapons in Canada, while not impeding the lawful use of firearms by Canadians.

Therefore, we will definitely need to look into different options, and I look forward to participating in those consultations.

●(1255)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I start, may I say it is a delight to see my colleague for Scarborough Centre back in the House after her recent illness. We share a border, and I know her to be a very hard-working MP. When she supports Bill C-71, I know it is on the basis that she has a very good ear to the ground and has worked hard with her constituents to establish her support.

It is an honour to rise and speak to Bill C-71. I have the good fortune to chair the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. As the chair, I remained relatively neutral as the debate occurred. However, it is not as if I do not have an opinion on Bill C-71.

After hearing 39 witnesses, reading 101 briefs, and meeting for over 18 hours, we now have an amended bill back in the House. This does not include either the minister's or his parliamentary secretary's extensive consultations, both within and outside of caucus.

At its heart, Bill C-71 is a relatively modest bill. It tries to do three or four things.

First of all, it tries to remove the decision on the classification of guns from the Governor in Council, namely the government, i.e. politicians, and place it with the RCMP.

Second, it grandfathers individual licence-holders in two sets of prohibited weapons, one being Czech and one being Swiss. Then, on a specific day that has already passed, June 30, it reinstates those weapons as prohibited weapons and makes new acquisitions prohibited. Under the previous legislation, or the order under the Governor in Council, those guns were not prohibited.

Third, it expands the realm of inquiry into background checks.

Fourth, it requires vendors to keep a record of sale and have a potential purchaser show a valid licence. There has been some considerable discussion about that over the course of the morning.

In addition, two very significant amendments were made. The first was unanimously agreed to by the committee, and I quote from the amendment: "nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to permit or require the registration of non-restricted firearms." In other words, it was unanimously agreed that this bill is not a gun registry. That amendment was moved by a Conservative member, the critic for public safety.

As my colleagues know, the term "gun registry" sends both sides of the debate into paroxysms of fear and loathing, which is not particularly helpful in actually reconciling this dialogue of the deaf. It seems to happen every time guns are debated on this floor. Apparently, anything that might make it easier for police to trace a weapon in an efficient way is something to be resisted at all costs, even at the cost of solving a crime.

The second amendment expands the realm of inquiry for someone looking to acquire a firearm licence. For instance, looking into somebody's digital life is good, and looking into someone's history of violent and threatening behaviour is also good. That amendment also passed unanimously after some vigorous back and forth among committee members.

In my view, the arbiter of the weapons classification system should be the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, not the Governor in Council. The first of the two main arguments against the removal of the GIC states that there is no right of appeal. This argument presumes that there should be a constitutional right to challenge the RCMP's classification or that of the Governor in Council.

● (1300)

In my view, when those who are in the pro-gun lobby think that a weapon has been classified as too restricted, i.e., prohibited or restricted, there is no one they can lobby to downgrade that classification: not an MP or a minister, and not during an election or after an election. The reason is as imaginative as one can be. I cannot understand why people would think that I, a politician, not particularly familiar with the classification of guns, should have any say in whether a gun is restricted or prohibited or not, on the basis of its millimetres, calibre, frequency of fire, length of barrel, etc. This is a responsibility that is appropriate for the RCMP only.

The second argument is that the RCMP makes mistakes. I do not know anybody who does not make mistakes. I do not know of any organization that does not make mistakes or is entirely consistent, including the courts, and indeed including this chamber.

However, there are a number of administrative and quasi-judicial entities from which there is no right of appeal and whose decisions are final. The classification of firearms seems to me to be one of those areas of administrative law in which it is appropriate that the police classify and make the final decision. I would note that any administrative decision can be appealed regardless.

Personally, I would rather take my chances with an organization that has a daily life experience with firearms, rather than some people in cabinet or on the floor of the House.

The firearms that are listed in Bill C-71, the Swiss and Czech firearms, which were grandfathered until June 30, were given a lower classification. This just illustrates the problem: Some people would have classified them as restricted, some would have classified them as prohibited, and some would have classified them as not restricted. I believe the RCMP should make that decision.

Finally, Bill C-71 requires a business to keep a record of sale. This might be thought to be obvious, and apparently it has been obvious for a number of years in a number of jurisdictions. Bill C-71 makes this a requirement. Many are convinced that this makes for a backdoor registry. Apparently, business records held by multiple private businesses across the country constitute a backdoor registry in the minds of some. I would hope that the amendment, as moved by the Conservative member, and as agreed to unanimously by the committee, puts an end to that argument.

In conclusion, this bill is exceedingly modest. Expanding background checks is good. Removing political input into the classification of firearms is good. Requiring the retention of sales records is good. The reclassification of certain weapons is good. I believe colleagues should support this bill as amended.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding I have a number of farmers, hunters and sport shooters. This summer I took the opportunity to visit a few of the sport shooting ranges and was impressed with the increased attention they were giving to safety and training. They are totally committed to the safety of firearms, proper licensing, background checks, and all of these things. They are convinced that Bill C-71 has good intentions but does nothing more than make it difficult for lawful gun owners. They believe it does nothing toward increasing the public safety of our country.

My colleague who just spoke has been quoted as saying, "I don't think I speak out of turn when I say that there is no tolerance for people having guns in Toronto, period—long guns, short guns, in-between guns, fast guns, slow guns." Coming from the chair of the committee that studied this bill, this shows a lack of understanding of the number of gun owners there are in Toronto who are sport shooters and hunters, and who abide by the rules as they are.

I am also wondering if the member could comment on his thoughts about the Liberals' eventual plan to ban all firearms.

● (1305)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I have the great honour to represent a riding in the east end of Toronto, a riding I have represented for 20-odd years. I believe I have some authority and right to speak to this on behalf of my constituents.

It is virtually unanimous that there is no need to have handguns, or any kind of guns, in one's possession in the city of Toronto. That was reflected in the unanimous motion by the City of Toronto. It was reflected in the unanimous motion by the City of Montreal.

If there is a requirement to sports shoot, that can be accommodated. However, to have firearms in one's possession creates difficulties. We heard at committee that the possession and ready availability of weapons made for higher incidents of crime, with very tragic consequences.

I am sure my colleague would actually support the elimination, reduction and control of weapons, as much as possible. I look forward to him supporting Bill C-71.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I support Bill C-71. I am particularly grateful to have this chance on this debate. I attempted to gain the floor a few times before today.

I did want to draw attention to one amendment I am particularly pleased to note was achieved through collaboration, which is always nice to see, and non-partisan co-operation in the clause-by-clause. One of my amendments was adopted, changed, and re-emerged as an amendment by the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington. I am grateful to her. I want to mention this amendment again, and ask my friend from Scarborough—Guildwood for his thoughts on it.

What we have done is expand those things for which prospective gun owners will be screened to include any history of threats of violence against an intimate partner. I am feeling optimistic that the legislation may help protect usually women, but not always, from being killed at the end of a bad relationship. I cannot begin to describe how bad that is.

The history of violence against women in the country has to come to a stop, and threats of violence against intimate partners are now in the fabric of the legislation as a reason that someone would not be able to buy a gun.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more.

Given the past summer, given the evidence we heard, given the tragedies spelled out by witness after witness, not only with murder and assault but also with suicide, also with intimate partners, I just cannot imagine how anyone would not support this amendment, which might go some distance toward reducing that. Just a basic inquiry into the violent history of an individual or the psychiatric history of the individual seems to me to be a step forward.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute honour to rise in the House today to stand up for law-abiding gun owners as I declare my opposition to Bill C-71.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Today is my last opportunity to address the flaws in this failed legislation brought forward by the Liberal government. We all know the Liberals intend to ram it through the House of Commons without due process. They have already shown us that.

The Liberals shut down debate at second reading and at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, members of the committee asked that Bill C-71 be allowed a sufficient number of meetings and witnesses, but the Liberals decided to cut it short. They do not care about what law enforcement agents have to say. They do not want to give time to legislative experts. They certainly do not want to give voice to the Canadian public.

When those empowered turn a deaf ear to the people they represent, arrogance incapacitates any ability to exercise logic or common sense.

From the start, the government did not want to debate Bill C-71. It did not want to consult or listen; it wanted to just ram it through. The Liberals would rather push through this failed legislation that aims to deceive Canadians into believing that it actually would do something to protect them, when, in fact, it does nothing. In actuality, the Liberals are going after those who already follow the law. At the same time, the Liberals are putting legislation in place that would reward criminals.

Bill C-71 would create a backdoor long-gun registry. It calls for the confiscation of firearms that were legally purchased by Canadians and would allow the federal government to share firearms records with the province of Quebec. Furthermore, it would remove the ability of licensed firearms owners to transport their restricted firearms to a gunsmith or trade show.

Bill C-71 is flawed legislation that would crack down on responsible, law-abiding firearms owners and would do absolutely nothing to go after those who would engage in violent crime.

The Liberals are rushing through flawed legislation that would potentially criminalize tens of thousands of responsible citizens, while allowing a whole host of criminals to go free.

When I was in Nunavut this spring, I had many opportunities to speak with hunters. These Inuit hunters talked to me about the potential implications of the legislation and how upset they were by it. At the public safety committee, indigenous leaders said that the legislation actually threatened them and, therefore, they could take legal action against it, that it infringed upon their constitutional rights.

I am proud to live in the southern Alberta riding of Lethbridge. Many families there enjoy the heritage of hunting and sports shooting. These are peaceful individuals. They are peaceful gun owners, men, women and youth. They have the opportunity to use their firearms in a responsible manner and have gone through a rigorous vetting process in order to do so.

When I talk to my constituents, they are deeply concerned about Bill C-71. In fact, I recently sat down with my youth advisory board. It is a non-partisan group of individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. I had the opportunity to listen to their thoughts. This is what they wanted me to share with the Prime Minister on their behalf.

They asked me to remind the Prime Minister that he was the leader of a country and not a teacher in a high school drama classroom. They asked me to remind him that he needed to lead with honesty, that he needed to function with integrity and that he needed to stop attacking those who owned their firearms legally and used their guns responsibly. Instead, they asked him to put legislation in place that would go after the real criminals.

They called this legislation "absolute nonsense". They said that this legislation was an emotionally charge response to a problem in the United States and unfairly punishes law-abiding Canadians. Furthermore, they begged the question, "Why is the Prime Minister skewing facts and telling mistruths in order to pass this legislation that punishes those who lawfully own a firearm?"

The fact that indigenous people across the country and the youth of my riding strongly oppose this bill should be some indication to the House that there are huge flaws. However, there is more.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of standing in the House and presenting e-petition 1608. As the sponsor of this petition, which calls for the repeal of Bill C-71, I felt it was absolutely essential to provide Canadians with the opportunity to oppose the Liberals' reckless and nonsensical legislation.

This petition was started by a 15-year-old in my riding by the name of Ryan Slingerland. As an informed and engaged young Canadian, he was upset when he learned about the Liberals' failed legislation. To quote Ryan directly, he said, "law-abiding citizens are not the issue with gun violence".

● (1310)

With more than 86,000 signatures, e-petition 1608 is the second most signed e-petition in Canadian history. It sends a strong message to the Liberal government, and that is to back off.

The e-petition has signatories from every single province and territory, which means this is an issue that impacts our country as a whole. There are voices standing up in unity from coast to coast, asking the government to do something about the real criminals and to stop going after those who are law-abiding citizens.

The government is clearly more interested in painting a picture of caring rather than actually caring about the safety of Canadians. That is wrong. That is not good governance. Canadians from coast to coast can tell this, and they are calling on the government to be honest and to put proper legislation in place.

Good governments rest on the principle of listening, followed by action. Therefore, on behalf of law-abiding gun owners, I am pleading with the government today to exercise wisdom, to do what is right and take a step back.

The irony in all of this is that while the Liberals are demonizing hunters and sports shooters, the Prime Minister is actually reducing penalties for a massive list of extremely serious crimes. I am talking about participating in a terrorist group, trafficking women and girls, committing violence against a clergy member, murdering a child within one year of his or her birth, abducting a child, forcing marriage, advocating for genocide or participating in organized crime. The list goes on and on. That is just a sample.

Under Bill C-75, the government is reducing the penalties for these crimes. Does that sound like a government that cares about taking criminals off the street? Does that sound like a government that cares about protecting the well-being of Canadians, about making sure that moms are safe at home with their kids, or that they are safe at the park, or that Canadians are safe to go and enjoy an ice-cream cone out on a patio on a public sidewalk? Does that speak of a government that actually cares about our general border safety and control and security of the country? No, absolutely not.

A government that cared about the well-being of Canadians would put laws in place that would combat gang violence and organized crime. That government would not go and reward those people.

The current government is saying that it wants to keep Canadians safe and prevent gun violence, but Bill C-71 does absolutely nothing to accomplish this end. It fails to address gang violence. It fails to address the issue of illegal firearms and it fails to address rural violence and crime. In fact, the Liberal government's failure is so severe that of the $327 million it earmarked to tackle gun and gang violence, not a single penny has gone out the door.

Again, I ask this. If the government were really concerned about the well-being of Canadians and wanting to tackle crime and go after perpetrators, should it not be rolling out the money it put in the budget to do so? However, it is not concerned about that at all. Instead, it is concerned about going after the women and men who properly own their firearms, who have been extensively researched, who have a licence and are able to possess their firearm legally and use it responsibly. Why is the government doing that?

Bill C-71 targets those people unfairly and it creates the failed long gun registry that cost Canadians $1 billion to set up the very first time. I am proud to be part of a party that scrapped that wasteful legislation. We have vowed to do the same thing when we become government again.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the legislation before the House also unfairly turns thousands of Canadians into criminals overnight. It does this by reclassifying a number of firearms as prohibited. I am talking about firearms that are legally brought into Canada and that are legally possessed. This has been done for years. These individuals would, overnight, be in possession of something that would be illegal, thanks to the government.

Not a single one of the measures being put in place would take guns out of the hands of criminals. Criminals do not purchase their guns legally and they certainly do not register them.

In summary, Bill C-71 is yet again another failed piece of legislation from the government. It does absolutely nothing to protect our communities, to make them safer or to target those who are responsible for crime.

I am proud to say that a Conservative government will repeal and replace this legislation. We will replace it with a law that targets criminals, protects Canadians and respects those who lawfully own their firearms. That is a good government. That is the government that the House will see in 2019.

● (1315)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member realizes that the signatures on that petition reflect just 4% of licenced Canadian firearms owners. I would not sign that petition. We need to listen to all Canadians. It also only reflects 0.25% of all Canadians across this country.

While I do believe that we should respect the rights and privileges of licenced gun owners, we also have to realize that we need to listen to all sides of this debate.

● (1320)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that we need to listen to members on all sides of this debate, and I could not agree more with her. But why would the Liberals shut down debate at second reading? Why did the Liberals not want to hear from an extensive list of witnesses? Why would the Liberals not want to do that? Why would they want to shut those voices down? If they actually care about making sure that every voice makes it to the table, why not allow that to happen? That acted to prevent that from happening.

From the beginning, the Liberals saw an opportunity to bring a bill forward that was incredibly dishonest, one that would resonate at an emotional level. They said they were doing all of these things to protect Canadians, when in fact the bill does nothing to take guns off the street. The bill does nothing to take guns out of the hands of criminals. It only goes after those who have already gone through an extensive vetting process and who use their guns responsibly. That is all this legislation does. The government has failed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I can understand that my colleague is a little angry because false information has been circulating about this bill.

For example, the Prime Minister sent out tweets stating that the government was going to crack down on illegal guns, but the bill does not deal with that. Most of the bill concerns restricted and prohibited guns. There are also some regulations concerning long guns.

In the interest of providing accurate information, would the member agree with me that the major changes that affect people with a long gun licence and who do not own a gun that will be reclassified is that their name will be recorded when purchasing a gun and that they will have to make a phone call when they sell one?

Is that information correct? If she could spell that out, it would help people understand what they are hearing.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member brought up a tweet by the Prime Minister. Another of the Prime Minister's tweets was also a mistruth. Canadians would call it a lie, but in this place we are not allowed to call it that, so it is a mistruth here. The Prime Minister tweeted that when this legislation comes into play, Canadians will "have to show a license at the point of purchase. Right now that's not a requirement."

We have a Prime Minister putting legislation in place but who does not even understand the existing laws. Right now, if an individual wants to acquire a firearm, that individual must show a PAL. That individual must show a licence that he or she can acquire that firearm. In order to get a licence that allows an individual to acquire a firearm, that individual not only has to got through an extensive amount of training but also has to be vetted. Extensive background checks are done and references have to be provided. Then the individual has to present a passport or some other form of government ID with his or her picture on it, as well as the licence verifying that you are that person. They have to prove they are that person and they are licenced to acquire and use that firearm.

It is incredibly deceptive of the Prime Minister to attempt to mislead Canadians and try to convince them that he is somehow doing something in their favour when in fact that law already exists.

The Prime Minister needs to stop painting law-abiding firearms owners as if they are the devil when they are not.

● (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, I just want to remind the hon. members that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly in the chamber when we are referring to something. I know there are slip-ups, but because there are more discussions and speeches coming up, I just want to remind everyone so that members can apply it their remarks. Resuming debate.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-71,, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms.

I have many concerns with this piece of legislation, but as there is limited time, I would like to focus my remarks today on what I consider to be a shocking oversight. I believe that all of us in this place would agree that it must be the highest priority of a government to protect the lives and safety of its constituents, of the people they are serving. Of all our duties, this is the most profound.

In order to protect our citizens, to put effective solutions in place, it is vitally important that we understand the problem. In this case, it is to recognize who is committing the violent crimes within Canada. I believe there is a simple answer to that question, and it is gangs.

In 2016, one of every two firearms-related homicides was committed by organized crime, yet nowhere in this bill are the words "gang" or "organized crime" mentioned. At best, this is an unintentional oversight. At its worst, it is intentional. After all, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness himself spoke about this issue earlier this year, saying on March 18:

> Criminal gun and gang violence is a grave threat to the safety of our communities. While overall crime rates in Canada are much lower than decades ago, homicides, gun crime and gang activity have all been steadily increasing. Gun homicides have almost doubled over the past four years—and more than half are linked to gangs.

Before continuing, I want to address one point about this statement. Statistics can provide a good basis for solid policy, but only if they are seen within their proper context. I believe the minister did not provide that proper context. The minister chose to use a particular timeline in the quote above, namely "four years". As was made clear by his office, the year he is referencing is actually 2013.

Why is that significant? The minister claimed that gun homicides have almost doubled over the past four years. That statement is very misleading when placed in context. The year 2013 happened to have had the lowest number of firearms homicide ever recorded by Statistics Canada. The next closest year on record, 1998, had 13% more homicides.

The Liberals chose 2013 as the base year to make it appear as if gun homicides were growing at a shocking rate. Now the Liberals are using these statistics to justify punishing highly vetted, law-abiding gun owners by painting a picture of Canada as the wild west. However, an unbiased look at the numbers reveals a different story. If there is to be any comparison to the wild west, it would have to refer to our ongoing struggle with gang violence.

In 2016, gang members committed 114 firearms homicides compared with 134 total homicides in 2013, the year referenced by the minister. That is a shocking statistic, no matter how it is viewed. The minister noted that gang-related firearm homicides made up half of all firearms homicides in 2016. This is significantly above average and is a cause for concern.

How is it that after recognizing the central role of organized crime in firearms murders on March 8, the minister introduced a bill just days later that ignores organized crime?

Further, not only have the Liberals failed to meaningfully address gang violence in this bill, but in this bill's companion piece, Bill C-75, they are weakening the laws currently in place to combat gang violence. Bill C-75 amends the Criminal Code to lessen the sentences for serious and even violent crimes to as little as a fine. Among those crimes is participation in organized criminal activity, in other words, joining a gang.

What is the justification for lowering the legal penalties for gang members while punishing legal firearms owners? I cannot think of one. However, time and time again the Liberals have gone after legal firearms owners rather than the criminals who use firearms.

● (1330)

Gang members or other criminals are not going to be deterred by a law that further restricts legal firearms owners. They will only respond to laws that hold serious consequences for their illegal activities. The government had two opportunities to address the significant problem of gang violence, a problem the minister is very aware of, yet has failed to do so. The government has failed by weakening the punishment for gang activities, and again by not making changes to our firearms laws that would target gangs.

Not only does Bill C-71 do nothing to address gang violence, but it misses the mark on rural crime as well. My riding of Carlton Trail —Eagle Creek is a large and mostly rural riding. I have heard numerous concerns from constituents about the growing issue of rural crime. This place recognized the severity of that issue and passed unanimously the motion brought by my colleague from Lakeland, Motion No. 167. That motion will result in a committee study of rural crime. Every Liberal member who was present voted for the motion, including the Prime Minister. Surely that must mean the government understands there are unique problems faced by rural Canadians, yet nothing in this bill addresses rural crime.

Instead, Bill C-71 targets law-abiding firearms owners by, among other things, breaking the Liberals' election promise and reintroducing the wasteful and divisive long-gun registry through the backdoor. In this bill, the Liberals have introduced a backdoor registry by requiring firearms retailers to keep a registry of every firearm they sell for 20 years and by requiring private transfers to be verified by the registrar of firearms. This should come as no shock, but registrars keep registries. Firearms retailers would now be required to act as registrars themselves. They would be responsible for the cost of maintaining this information and for the security of that information. The private and personal information of millions of Canadians must by law be kept by a business for 20 years. These registries would be accessible by law enforcement and must be turned over to the government if the retailer goes out of business.

It is a registry by any other name, but the Liberals will now continue to refuse to use the term "registry" because they know how upset Canadians were about the last Liberal long-gun registry. They think that by not naming it and obscuring its location, Canadians will not notice. They are wrong. I have heard from hundreds of constituents who are frustrated that the Liberals have broken their campaign promise and reintroduced the firearms registry. They feel betrayed by the current government. They are disgusted that the Liberals would try to hide their broken promise behind technicalities and muddied language. They deserve better than to be treated like criminals.

In closing, I believe that we as parliamentarians have the responsibility to create laws that protect our citizens; that reflect real-world, objective data; that treat law-abiding Canadians fairly; and that address the concerns of Canadians regarding crime and gang violence. This bill does not meet any of those requirements. For this reason, I cannot and will not support Bill C-71.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this debate and the last time it was before the House, we repeatedly heard the arguments why decisions on the regulation and classification of firearms should be taken out of the hands of politicians and put into the hands of the experts and those who understand firearms and what they are capable of. Can the member opposite comment on whether she agrees with the fact that experts are better at handling the classification, or if she believes that politicians would in fact be better at handling that classification?

● (1335)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, what I agree with is that it is up to lawmakers, up to members of Parliament to create laws, and it is up to us to be very clear about what it is we are creating. The fact that the current government has been very ambiguous and somewhat deceptive in what it is trying to create through Bill C-71 should be a concern not only for the rest of us in the House, those of us sitting in the opposition benches, but also to all Canadians and the experts themselves.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is really directed to the Conservative caucus about the process we are following today. The hon. member for Lethbridge spoke of the Liberals forcing this bill through, ramming the bill through and bringing in time allocation, but under parliamentary procedure, if even one Conservative had said no to time allocation on Bill C-71, there would not be time allocation on Bill C-71. It was a motion by unanimous consent.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Was it not unanimous consent? Well, perhaps my memory is faulty for which I apologize.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I understand the question. It is my understanding that whenever the government introduces time allocation on any piece of legislation. we vote on it and that the majority wins.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite my colleague to comment on the juxtaposition that takes place between Bill C-71 and Bill C-75.

Bill C-71 of course is a piece of legislation the Liberal government has brought forward that has to do with guns. Meanwhile, Bill C-75 has to do with decreasing sentences for a number of heinous crimes, including genocide. The Liberals are claiming that Bill C-71 would actually go after gangs and gun violence and that it would help make our communities safer. Meanwhile, Bill C-75 would appear to do the exact opposite by actually making life a whole lot easier for criminals.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on that.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I note that my colleague made a wise intervention earlier today.

I think I mentioned this contradiction in my remarks on Bill C-71. It is somewhat rich to introduce a bill that would appear to be getting tough on crime when it would actually do nothing to address violent crime or gangs, while at the same time reducing the sentences for individuals who perpetuate violent crimes.

The member did a great job of articulating that in her remarks, I mentioned it in mine, and I think it should come as no surprise that this contradiction exists with this particular government.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

It is a pleasure to rise at the third reading stage of this important legislation. Bill C-71 will uphold the commitments made by the government during the last election to introduce modest measures on firearms that address weaknesses in the current legal firearms regime. That includes the commitment not to reinstate a federal long-gun registry.

From the start, the bill has been guided by the priorities of protecting people and communities, supporting law enforcement and ensuring law-abiding firearms owners are treated fairly and reasonably. I am pleased to note that throughout the bill's progress, those priorities were reaffirmed by a broad range of stakeholders, partners and individual Canadians. Consultation does not mean that everyone agrees. It means that we have made the effort to hear all of the arguments, pro and con.

At committee there were some important motions for amendment. In fact, the amendments that were adopted came from every party. The first added to the specific criteria that must be considered when determining eligibility to hold a firearms licence, specifically to add threatening conduct, non-contact orders and more explicit language around risk of harm to self or to others. The amendments also make it clearer that when threatening violence and conduct occur, it includes those communicated in the digital realm. The amendments also specify that when considering eligibility for a firearms licence, expired orders prohibiting the possession of firearms where an offence in which violence was used, threatened or attempted against an intimate partner or former intimate partners must also be considered.

This should reassure Canadians that in the interest of public safety, the process through which a person can obtain a firearm includes a more comprehensive consideration of eligibility factors. Explicitly including the concept of harm on that list, which includes self harm, may also have important impacts. It is an absolute tragedy that 80% of firearm deaths in Canada are suicides and while suicide prevention is a whole-of-society issue, there are meaningful actions we can take through legislation. This is one of those contributing actions. Prevention experts agree that limiting access to guns for those at risk of suicide is part of the solution, along with access to mental health support.

I am glad to see that the concept of harm is clearly identified in the bill before us. I will also point out that the additional new criteria reflects the types of violence that predominantly target women, and I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for all her work on this issue. This includes harassment and cyber-violence. In the online space, women are often targets of intimidation and propaganda and young women and girls are impacted disproportionately by cyber-violence, bullying and harassment. Adding these new factors updates our laws to reflect and address today's reality of increasing online abuse and harassment. It is consistent with the government's gender-based violence strategy.

Other amendments add some clarification to the bill. For example, the committee amended clause 1 to make it clear that the government will not recreate the federal long-gun registry. We now have that clarification right in the text of the bill. I will point out that the bill never included any components that would have permitted or required the registration of non-restricted firearms. While this amendment does not change the effect of the bill, I am confident it can provide reassurance that the long-gun registry will not be reinstated.

In addition, another amendment to clause 5, which was adopted at committee, will help clarify that a person meeting the conditions to transfer a non-restricted firearm can transfer more than one. In practice, the amendment changes the word "a" in the bill to "one or more".

● (1340)

In fact, as proposed, the bill would not limit the number of non-restricted firearms that can be transferred, providing the conditions to do so are met. Once again, the bill is now clearer on that issue by virtue of the amendments. It now spells out specifically that a valid licence and a valid reference number attesting to the licence validity can support the transfer of ownership of more than one non-restricted firearm.

I am grateful that all parties have played an important role in the close scrutiny of this bill. It started off on solid footing. It already strengthens current laws around eligibility to hold a firearms licence. For example, it requires licensing authorities to consider specific information from the applicant's life history rather than just the previous five years. It improves licence verification, requiring anyone selling or giving a non-restricted firearm to verify the validity of the recipient's firearms licence. It improves record-keeping requirements among firearm businesses by requiring them to keep records of sale for non-restricted firearms. Responsible vendors already do this, but making it mandatory would not only set in law what they already do, it would also provide police with an additional tool to track non-restricted firearms which may have been trafficked from the legal to the illegal market.

The bill strengthens the regime around the transportation of restricted and prohibited firearms, but does not include non-restricted firearms, the ones used by hunters and farmers. It creates a more consistent approach to classification, responsibly leaving the technical determination on the classification of firearms to experts.

Today we have new measures with added benefits, such as enhanced background checks, greater certainty that no federal registry will be created and welcome clarification on non-restricted firearms transfers. Many Canadians from all walks of life have told us that the measures in this legislation are important. It is just one part of a larger package that will help make our communities safer and give law enforcement the tools they need to do their jobs.

In closing, I want to thank the members on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, all those who provided testimony and my colleagues in the House for helping shape this important legislation along the way. I encourage all members to join me in supporting Bill C-71.

● (1345)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I come from a rural riding and there are a lot of concerns that are meaningful and I have brought a lot of those concerns to this House.

One of the questions I am hoping the member can answer is on the issue around authorization to transport. What we are hearing is that this is going to be an online process. I am wondering how long it will take to be up. When it is up, will it be accessible for people for things like weekend gun shows and other activities people may want to participate in? Will there be any cost?

One of the challenges for a lot of folks in my riding is they do not want a lot more costs added to this process than they are already bearing. They are law-abiding gun holders who deserve and need these answers.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, the minister made it perfectly clear that for this regime, the transportation and movement of firearms, to be a success, we needed to put the priority on customer service. He committed to putting the resources there so that the process would be very responsive. If needed, people could actually have access to an ATT via their cellphones. He knows that is an important piece of this legislation and that it has to work in order to make that happen.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to gun crimes, the member mentioned that 80% of people killed by guns in Canada are from suicide. A great proportion of the rest of it is homicide, and a very small amount is accidental. I do not understand how this legislation is going to impact on any of that.

If we think of some of the recent things that have happened, such as the Danforth shooting, which was done with an illegal gun, or the fellow who brought a gun to the mosque, it is illegal to transport a weapon without a licence to transport, or to take it anywhere but a target shooting place. I do not understand how Bill C-71 will eliminate any of the huge number of illegal crimes that are happening. If the member could comment, I would appreciate it.

● (1350)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-71 is focused on addressing some weaknesses in the regime that covers legal firearms, and there is more work happening right now. We have appointed a Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, and his mandate will be to drill down and get some ideas on how to address that in the future.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague stated that this is to deal with legal firearms, not the illegal ones, and yet over and over again the mantra behind this is that we are going to deal with gun violence, crime and gangs.

I do not understand. The bill in no way deals with organized crime and the vast majority of crimes committed with firearms in Canada, so it is ineffective here. I mentioned earlier it is like taking a fly swatter to the elephant in the room. When it comes to participating in organized crime, material benefits from human trafficking, abducting a person under the age of 14, these are serious crimes. The government has said that with Bill C-75, it is going to adjust the penalties for these serious crimes to where it can be as low as a fine.

There is mixed messaging here, and I am wondering if the member can explain to me why, when there is nothing in the bill about guns and gangs, the Liberals are choosing to focus, as she has said, on law-abiding gun owners rather than the criminals.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, this has to do with improving things like background checks. Over time, we have seen the kind of violence, the harassment and abuse, that is targeted at women online. That needs to be addressed.

It also acknowledges that there are people who are suffering from mental illness and they might have access to a firearm. We need to make it more difficult for them to have that access.

There is a law in Quebec called Anastasia's law, and it allows mental health professionals to speak up if they have a patient they feel might be of harm to themselves or to others. That is not a federal responsibility, but it is something we will be speaking about with our provincial counterparts.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Surrey Centre will have seven minutes, and then we will interrupt. He will be able to continue once we resume debate.

The hon. member for Surrey Centre.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand behind the amended Bill C-71 at third reading. In my riding of Surrey Centre, guns and gangs have plagued the streets. Gun violence has increased, and it has continued to increase in the last few years. This is an issue that all three levels of government are working hard to tackle.

At the federal level, the Minister of Public Safety has also announced that the federal government will spend $327 million over five years on anti-gang initiatives and gun crime crackdown, and $100 million ever year thereafter. The government also held a summit in March to identify the best ways to control and curb gun violence. I am incredibly proud to represent Surrey Centre at the federal level, and to help end gun violence in my riding.

I have worked hard fighting against youth violence since my teens, and I have seen how prevention, intervention and community engagement combined can end and control these horrific levels of violence. I was honoured to be part of the mayor's task force on gang violence prevention, which was formed nine months ago, and has recently released its final report which contains six recommendations.

I believe that the first step in tackling this issue is to improve the firearms regime in Canada. Over the last decade, it is fair to say that controls over the transfer and movement of firearms in Canada were weakened. At the same time, converted automatic firearms have fallen into the wrong hands far too often. The Governor in Council used its authority to deem certain models as non-restricted or restricted, despite the fact that they met the Criminal Code definition for prohibited firearms.

In keeping with the mandate from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice have taken action to ensure that our regime is more appropriate. Strengthened background checks, licence verification, required record-keeping by vendors, more sensible rules around transportation of restricted and prohibited firearms, and a consistent approach to classification are before us today in the form of Bill C-71.

I am pleased to see that the legislation, as amended by the committee, has further strengthened the original proposals. The original Bill C-71 aimed to enhance background checks, for example. The amended Bill C-71 has taken that miles further, by adding specific new criteria that must be considered over the life history of an applicant, namely, whether the applicant has a history of threatening conduct; the applicant is or was previously prohibited by a non-contact order and presently poses a risk to the safety and security of any person; the person was previously subject to a firearms prohibition under order and in relation to an offence where violence was used, threatened or attempted against a person's intimate partner or former intimate partner; and the applicant, for any reason, poses a risk of harm to any person.

The amendment has taken this further by clarifying that threatened violence and threatening conduct can include what is communicated online, through the Internet or other digital networks. That is a welcome addition to the current regime.

Presently, when licensing authorities determine whether a person is eligible for a firearms licence, they are only required to consider certain factors, like a history of violence or mental illness that is linked to violent behaviour over the preceding five years of the applicant's life. Under Bill C-71, these authorities would be required to consider certain factors spanning a person's entire life rather than just the past five years. This will be a positive change in Canada. It would increase the confidence of Canadians in the overall effectiveness of our firearms licensing regime, and would assure them that all firearms licence applicants will, in the interest of public safety, have their backgrounds comprehensively vetted.

I would like to point out that at this stage, this does not in any way unfairly single out those with mental health issues; it is only mandatory for chief firearms officers or judges to consider mental health treatment related to violence, or threatened or attempted violence. All of this is in the interests of public safety and all Canadians.

● (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Surrey Centre will have five minutes and 15 seconds to continue his speech when we resume debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are federalists who think Quebeckers should stop complaining about how Ottawa spends their money because they receive equalization payments.

I would like them to meet the 1,000 families who are out of work because the Canadian government awarded $100 billion in shipbuilding contracts to shipyards everywhere except Quebec.

I would like them to meet our forestry producers, whose forests and lands are being ravaged by the spruce budworm. The Canadian government has invested $75 million to fight the budworm, but only in New Brunswick, not Quebec.

I would like them to meet our farmers, who were shortchanged in the free trade agreement, in the TPP, and, judging from the signals being sent by the Prime Minister, in NAFTA as well.

I would like them to explain to me why Quebec is being asked to pay $3 billion for Muskrat Falls so that Newfoundland can compete with Hydro-Québec.

It is time for Quebec to re-establish a balance of power. It is time for us to start fighting injustice again—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Willowdale.

[*English*]

CITY OF TORONTO MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House will always stand in defence of the charter and the rule of law. Peace, order and good government inform our Constitution, and while Canadians rely on Parliament for good and prudent government, they look to the courts for order.

Yesterday's ruling by the Ontario Court of Appeal has provided order to a needlessly chaotic situation surrounding Toronto's upcoming municipal election. While strong feelings still abound, it is now imperative that we look to the future. While these have been perplexing times for all of us, our city is blessed with numerous candidates who have somehow remained undeterred throughout the confusion and anger. My hat goes off to each of the many candidates for their public service.

Recent events have demonstrated yet again that elections have consequences. The election of our government in 2015 resulted in a strong—

● (1400)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHARLESBOURG—HAUTE-SAINT-CHARLES

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise in honour of the 325th anniversary of Saint-Charles-Borromée parish, which was founded on September 26, 1693. It is located in the heart of Trait-Carré, a historic site in my riding.

Celebrations will take place on September 30, with a high mass and a benefit concert to raise funds for the parish's charity drive.

My office is also working with Steeve Guérard, the parish manager, and Marc-André Bluteau, the president of the Charlesbourg historical society, to organize a commemorative ceremony in November for those who fought in the First and Second World Wars. This year is the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

We will also be launching a remembrance project called "Charlesbourg Remembers" and making the Saint-Charles-Borromée cemetery a place for quiet reflection.

I invite everyone to visit Trait-Carré, a historic site with many stories to tell.

I am proud to talk about all the wonderful things going on in my riding when I am here in Ottawa. I know that the organizers' hard work will make for an excellent 325th anniversary celebration.

* * *

ANNETTE CÔTÉ-SAVOIE

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House of Commons today.

I visited all four cities in my riding this summer to meet people. I had the good fortune and privilege of meeting Annette Côté-Savoie, a woman who was celebrating her 108th birthday. Yes, I said 108.

Ms. Côté-Savoie is an extraordinary woman, a long-time feminist, and still very sharp and independent. She is interested in current events and likes to stay informed. We talked about the advancement of women in our society and the work that remains to be done. She used to work as an assistant in the National Assembly. The public library in Deux-Montagnes has a room named after her in recognition of her dedication to the community.

At the end of our meeting, I asked her if she had a message for young women and the women here in the House of Commons. Her message was this: "Girls, keep forging ahead, keep pushing, open those doors, never stop."

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is International Day of Peace. It is a day for us to commit to building communities without fear, building communities of well-being instead of a sense of power that comes from control and fear. International Day of Peace is a new supplementation to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let all states today recommit to advancing the goals of peace in our communities so that we do not have to have commemorative days like this. How we and our communities operate needs to come from a place of peace.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister for appointing a dedicated minister for seniors. We know that the senior population continues to grow every year. In my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, that population grew by 33% between 2011 and 2016.

[*English*]

Last week I met Bill Berryman, the chair of the Seniors' Advisory Council of Nova Scotia, one of its kind. It meets monthly and works with the minister. The seniors have been talking about their major issues. Of course, there is pension security, pharmacare, engaging seniors and giving them opportunities, transportation and dementia.

Last week I had the opportunity to meet the minister and the parliamentary secretary to discuss what was important for seniors as we went forward to try to find a national seniors strategy plan.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRIFOOD

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, I began touring my riding in order to raise awareness of and promote agrifood production, a sector of our economy that deserves our full attention.

From sugar season to the grape harvest, I listened to vegetable growers, dairy farmers, livestock producers, and processors, as well as the agriculture students who will take over these businesses. They have tremendous expertise. They welcomed me warmly and gave many informative interviews on farming, processing, education and innovation that we shared on social media. Our region is fertile ground for research and development and for organic farming.

I have to say that there is growing concern about our current government's summer of dismal failures and its inability to negotiate a free trade agreement that is good for the agrifood sector.

Let us support and applaud the expertise of agricultural workers across Quebec and Canada, including those in my riding of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

* * *

[*English*]

SENIORS

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, the fastest growing segment of our population is people over 65. One of their biggest challenges they often face in silence is loneliness.

To combat feelings of isolation, organizations like the Burnaby Neighbourhood House and Burnaby Community Services have joined together to develop the allies in aging program.

Allies in aging aims to ensure that seniors have a meaningful support network, engage in regular activities and feel connected to their friends and family. It has been incredibly successful.

With the help of over 1,700 volunteers and service providers and a $2.5 million investment through our government's new horizons funding, almost 14,000 seniors in Burnaby, North Vancouver and across the Lower Mainland have been connected to various projects that help address isolation.

Programs like allies in aging are making real differences in our communities. It is important to continue to support these so our parents and grandparents can make new friends and enjoy their golden years to the fullest.

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[*Translation*]

RIGAUD FALL FESTIVAL

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, once again, Rigaud is where the action is. As Mayor Hans Gruenwald Jr. said, all residents of Vaudreuil-Soulanges are invited to enjoy the Festival des couleurs in Rigaud, which will be held from October 6 to 8. Activities and shows for the whole family will take place in Chartier-De Lotbinière park, on Rigaud Mountain, and, starting this year, at Arbraska Rigaud.

Thanks to the great work of Christiane Lévesque, the City of Rigaud team, and many volunteers, children and adults will be able to enjoy family activities, great regional products, and the autumn colours.

The beauty of our region and the talents of its many artisans will be on display together again in our beautiful town of Rigaud. Everyone is welcome.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT FILES

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people in my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London are concerned with the direction of the government on almost every file.

I will begin with NAFTA. From agricultural producers to automotive manufacturers, they have lost faith in the government. Canada was left out of the NAFTA negotiations for three months. This failure will have massive impacts on Canadians. A small craft brewery has estimated that its costs will increase $50,000 just this year. How can this business remain competitive?

In Ontario, we know that the success of the Trans Mountain pipeline is a success for all Canadians. However, after three weeks, the government still has no real plan to get this pipeline built and Canadians back to work.

To top it off, relationships with our allies and trading partners have gone up in smoke. Tense relationships with China, India, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have led to big losses. We are losing doctors, students, and many potential trade contracts are all at stake following the government's lack of diplomacy.

The year 2018 will be remembered as the Prime Minister's summer of failures.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ITALIAN-CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Italian-Canadian community is without a doubt a part of Canada's social fabric.

[*English*]

However, during World War II, the government labelled 31,000 Italian Canadians as enemy aliens and sent over 600 men to internment camps. The lives of these men and their families were permanently damaged and businesses closed. No charges were ever laid.

[*Translation*]

On September 18, in the presence of a number of family members of internees, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police held a tree-planting ceremony to express regret for its role in the internment.

[*English*]

I want to thank the RCMP and Commissioner Brenda Lucki for this historic gesture; and especially James Malizia, assistant commissioner, federal policing, and oral historian, Joyce Pillarella, both grandchildren of internees, for their organizational efforts.

Most of all, I wish to thank the families of the internees for their resilience, their courage and their shining embodiment of civic virtue.

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● (1410)

COMMUNITY HEROES

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in this place as the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, proud because I get to work supporting our everyday heroes: our police officers, firefighters, paramedics, corrections officers, security and emergency personnel. They work tirelessly every day to protect, serve and help Canadians. They have dedicated their lives to serving others. In my riding of Kanata—Carleton, I have had the chance to regularly meet with these true professionals. We should all be thankful for their selfless service to others.

I know that first responders will be on duty in Carp this weekend at the 155th Carp Fair, "the best little fair in Canada". They will be there, ready to help if needed.

I invite everyone to come out and enjoy the fair and take the time to meet and thank these true community heroes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a wonderful summer we had. It was filled with warmth and good spirits, but they were cut short. It was the end of sunny ways: a summer of failure and broken Liberal promises.

We would all have applauded a memorable G7 that brought about meaningful economic spinoffs, but that is not what happened. Many economic players in my riding suffered because of it, not to mention the legacy project to install cell towers that do not work. What a failure.

A month ago, the government rejected my leader's request for an emergency debate on free trade, but now, the Prime Minister sees it as critically important. We were prepared to come back, but not him. What a failure.

I also want to talk about this government's loose ethics. It creates rules, gets caught by the commissioner, and never learns from its mistakes. What a failure.

The biggest travesty is that this government—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

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LAURENTIDES—LABELLE

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from Sainte-Anne-des-Lacs to the Petawaga ZEC, by way of Lantier, Huberdeau, and Notre-Dame-du-Laus, I travelled more than 10,000 kilometres this summer to meet with the residents of the 43 municipalities in my riding.

I joined hundreds of young people at an aviation open house organized as part of the young aviators program in Sainte-Anne-du-Lac and Mont Tremblant. I met with more than 100 employers, community organizations, and students who were benefiting from the Canada summer jobs program. I attended more than 100 community activities, festivals and events, where I congratulated and thanked the organizers and volunteers who get involved in our communities and without whom there could be no community events.

I often feel like I have the best job in the world, because it allows me to meet people and spend time with them. People are the heart and soul of a region. I can say without a doubt that Laurentides—Labelle is the most beautiful riding in Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer I had the opportunity to see Saskatoon residents doing their part to live sustainably.

I joined Holly Ann Knott and Jim Spinney as they celebrated the certification of their passive house, the first home in the Canadian Prairies to meet these standards. They are not alone.

Mike Nemeth and his partner, Shannon Dyck, are moving into the newest sustainable housing complex, meeting passive house standards in my riding, Radiance Cohousing.

I also attended the launch of Canada's first 100% solar powered electric vehicle available for anyone to use through the Saskatoon CarShare Co-operative. The Saskatoon Environmental Society Solar Co-operative has installed the solar panels that will provide renewable energy to the Saskatoon grid powering the electric vehicles.

This Canadian first was possible because of great partners, like YWCA Saskatoon, Sun Country Highway, Saskatchewan Research Council, Saskatoon Light & Power, Affinity Credit Union and many more.

I ask all members of the House to join me in celebrating these incredible efforts toward a sustainable future.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a summer of total failure for the Prime Minister.

First, Canada's infrastructure bank, which costs taxpayers billions of dollars a year, announced its very first project. It turns out that the funding for the project was one the Liberals announced months ago, but decided to reclassify under the infrastructure bank to make it look like this boondoggle was not a waste of taxpayer money.

The Liberals then tried to cover up their failures, particularly the failure from the member for Edmonton Mill Woods, by having the Prime Minister re-announce major infrastructure funding to make it look like things were getting done. However, they only appear to be getting done if one lives in a Liberal riding.

The media reported yesterday that the Liberals went on a summer of failure tour and pledged $43 billion in funding, but mostly in Liberal-held ridings.

The Prime Minister talks about fairness for everyone, but his actions and the actions of the Liberal government prove they only want to help Canadians who agree with them.

* * *

● (1415)

INTERNATIONAL HOMECOMING FESTIVAL

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade and in these uncertain times with NAFTA negotiations, I cannot think of a better time to share a story of friendship between two nations.

In Canada's "Chocolate Town" of St. Stephen in my riding of New Brunswick Southwest, I have been honoured to participate in "Hands Across the Border", an opening ceremony for the International Homecoming Festival, a long-standing festival of 45 years, celebrated with the city of Calais, Maine in the United States.

To open the ceremony, customs officers close traffic lanes on the bridge that span the St. Croix River between St. Stephen, New Brunswick and Calais, Maine. Government representatives, legion members, RCMP officers and residents meet midway on the bridge to display flags from both countries and shake hands. This is not an ordinary handshake. This symbolic handshake signifies the importance of friendship, solidarity, good will and good faith between two communities and two countries, Canada and the United States.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how ironic is it that the Prime Minister is trying to win votes by acting all tough on NAFTA when he is really giving Donald Trump everything he wants? He blocked two pipelines, which means the U.S. can get our oil for cheap. Higher taxes and more red tape have sent our investments and our dollars south.

When will the Prime Minister stop handing our jobs and our money over to the Americans?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past three years, we have invested in creating economic growth for Canada's middle class. Our unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years. We created the strongest economic growth in the G7 last year, and we are creating over half a million full-time jobs across the country. We still have a lot of work to do. That is why we are sticking to our plan to put money in the pockets of the middle class and those working hard to join it.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister talks about last year's job numbers, it is interesting that we are now three-quarters into this year. He will not mention those numbers, because he knows that we have actually lost 15,000 jobs in Canada while the United States has gained over a million. That is the result of our money going south.

Canadian investment in the United States is up by two-thirds, while American investment in Canada is down by half. Why does the Prime Minister keep handing over our money, our business, and our jobs to Donald Trump?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservatives had an approach to the economy for 10 years that consisted of giving tax breaks and benefits to the wealthiest in the hope that it would grow the economy. Canadians made the opposite choice in 2015. They knew that giving a tax cut to the middle class while raising taxes on the wealthiest 1% was the path to go. That is exactly what we did.

The Conservatives voted against the middle-class tax break. The Conservatives voted to continue to give benefits to the wealthiest. We know that investing in the middle class is the way to grow the economy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the wealthiest 1% actually paid $4.5 billion less in taxes after the Liberal policies came into effect.

However, the question was about why the Prime Minister, while beating his chest and putting on a big dramatic performance, keeps handing over to Donald Trump everything the U.S. president asks for. He blocked our pipelines, giving Trump our oil on the cheap. He has raised our taxes, which is sending Canadian investment south of the border. When will he actually stand up for Canada in fact, rather than just in dramatic performance?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have heard from Canadians from coast to coast to coast over the course of this past summer, but indeed throughout the year, is the fact that they understand that Canadians are united in standing up for our values, our interests, and with our workers.

It is a shame that the Conservatives are choosing to play politics on relations with the United States. We are going to continue to stand up for Canadian interests, defend our jobs, and make sure we are growing our economy in ways that benefit everyone. That is perhaps not what the Conservatives want to do, but that is what we shall do on this side.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Christopher Garnier killed police officer Catherine Campbell in Truro, Nova Scotia and was found guilty of murder. He said that committing the murder gave him PTSD. Garnier never served a day of his life in Canadian military, yet the Prime Minister stood in the House yesterday and justified Veterans Affairs' paying for Garnier's benefits, saying that "When a man or woman serves in Canada's Armed Forces or in the RCMP, their whole family serves with them."

Does the Prime Minister actually believe that Chris Garnier should be receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see that the Conservatives just do not get it when it comes to caring for our veterans, or the members of our RCMP. They nickelled and dimed those veterans. They cut veterans offices. They cut benefits, and they wrap themselves in the flag every chance they get.

We are taking a serious approach that actually does ensure that we are supporting the families of those serving members, because we know that an entire family serves alongside a serving member. When it comes to this particular tragic, terrible case, we will—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a decision by the Liberal government to pay for the benefits of a convicted killer with money from Veterans Affairs when he has never served a single minute in Canada's military. If a serving member is found guilty of murder and dishonourably discharged, that member and his or her family would lose all their benefits.

For the sake of all those who served honourably and continue to fight Veterans Affairs for the benefits they earned, will the Prime Minister commit today to stop paying the benefits of this cop killer?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see once again that there is nothing the Conservatives will not stoop to to play politics with tragedies. I will not answer that question.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so far the Liberals so-called infrastructure bank is turning out to be a complete mess.

In the last year the bank spent over $11 million on its operations and all it did was lend money to one project, the light rail train in Montreal, a loan that was announced even before the bank was created. What are these millions being used for? Travel? Fancy offices? Bonuses?

Canadians are waiting for infrastructure projects that are years overdue and the Liberals are not delivering.

Could the Prime Minister at least tell us what these millions were spent on?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investing in infrastructure is one of the best ways of creating economic growth in the short term while preparing our economy and creating opportunities for the long term. Indeed, that is a choice we made to present to Canadians in the 2015 election, knowing that we were going to invest in communities and invest in their future.

The NDP made a very different choice. It picked the Conservative path of using cuts to balance the budget at all costs.

We will continue to invest in infrastructure and invest in our communities to benefit Canadians now and well into the future.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that story might be interesting if it were the issue. However, the fact is that the infrastructure bank's CEO actually said it might take up to 18 months before it started any other project.

All the bank did in this case was to take $1.28 billion in government money and give it to the Caisse de dépôt et placement. That is it.

Last month the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that close to $4 billion in budgeted infrastructure investments would be delayed to later years. Communities need funding now, not years from now.

What are the Liberals waiting for?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have flowed billions of dollars to communities across this country for real investments now that are making a difference in people's lives, while at the same time we established new and innovative ways to deliver the infrastructure that Canadians need over the medium term, and long term as well.

We know that the infrastructure deficit in this country left by the previous government and governments before that needed to be turned around. That is the choice we made. We presented it to Canadians in 2015.

We are delivering on our commitment to invest in communities right across the country in stronger and new ways.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep saying that the purpose of the infrastructure bank is to do more. However, the bank has asked the government for nearly $6 million this year to cover operating expenses and there is only one infrastructure project on the books. Where is the taxpayer's money going? After three years of inaction, the municipalities, especially the small ones, are calling for the investments to come immediately.

How does the government justify these expenses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP took a different path than we did in the last election. We wagered on investing in our communities, investing in Canada's future through infrastructure. The NDP wanted to balance the budget at all costs by making cuts. That was not our approach. We will continue to invest in municipalities across the country, including the small towns. Billions of dollars have been earmarked specifically for them because we know that investing in infrastructure helps Canadians now and in the future.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, infrastructure investments were needed three years ago, not after the next election.

Canadians have gotten used to simply avoiding the potholes and driving over bridges that are crumbling. Where do our tax dollars go? Canadians do not want it going to Liberal cronies, to Wall Street and Bay Street millionaires.

What is the money in the infrastructure bank being used for? The municipalities in my riding want to know.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP had nothing to offer Canadians three years ago in terms of infrastructure, because it chose to follow the Conservatives' economic model. We in the Liberal Party chose to make meaningful investments in communities and in the future of Canadians, and that is exactly what we did.

Over the past three years, billions of dollars have been invested in our communities from coast to coast to coast, but yes, more investment is needed. We continue to invest because we know we need to continue creating jobs, growing the economy and helping the middle class for years to come. That is what we are doing.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent internal report from the Department of National Defence indicates that the Royal Canadian Air Force is short 275 pilots. Of course, Canadians have very little interest in joining the air force when its pilots are not sure whether they are safe in their own planes, such as those at the Bagotville base.

What is more, the Liberal government is proposing to buy 25 outdated planes from Australia, seven of which will be used for parts to keep the other 18 in the air. They are Mr. Fixits.

What will be the Liberals' next boondoggle strategy to attract more pilots?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a decade of Conservative cuts, our government is making landmark investments in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are taking action to boost retention of our women and men in uniform, including the tax-free allowance for international operations and more than $6 million a year to support military families.

We have introduced initiatives to speed up recruitment and training to ensure that our Royal Canadian Air Force members can accomplish their jobs.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal summer of failure continues. We know that at least 7% of the illegal migrants are American citizens. We have also learned that only a handful of illegal migrants have been deported. What is more, no one believes that these thousands of American citizens meet the criteria to be admitted to Canada as refugees.

Quebeckers and Canadians are beginning to wonder why the Prime Minister is not taking this situation seriously. These migrants are not refugees.

We have a plan. Where is the Liberal plan?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Harper Conservatives, we make evidence-based decisions. The data show that the number of border crossers intercepted is lower than it was last year.

The Harper Conservatives continue to politicize the issue by fearmongering and spreading false information. That is difficult to understand, since they are the ones who left us with a chronically underfunded asylum system with extremely long wait times.

Our government will continue to enforce Canada's immigration laws.

●(1430)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how funny that the Minister of National Revenue is the fourth minister responsible for border security. Now we really have seen everything.

I am talking about the 31,000 people who have entered Canada since the Prime Minister's infamous tweet. More than 65% of these people have legal status in the United States, but the Prime Minister told them to come here, and some of them misunderstood the message.

We simply want to know whether these files can be processed so we can send back those who are not eligible to claim refugee status here. That is all.

We have a plan. Where is theirs?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. Our government is working with provincial and municipal governments to manage the asylum claims compassionately and in accordance with international law and Canada's humanitarian values.

When the Conservatives were in power, they cut almost $400 million from the Canada Border Services Agency's budget. That is not the right approach. We do not need any lectures from the Conservatives.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our borders are under significant pressure. Over 30,000 illegal border crossers have crossed into Canada in the last two years. These illegal crossers put a huge pressure on taxpayers and cause delays and backlogs for those who play by the rules. We have been asking the government for two years to fix this problem, but it has fallen on deaf ears.

When will the Liberals fix this problem?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to add some facts to this discussion.

The member opposite mentioned that there is a percentage of these irregular border crossers who have American citizenship. They are infants. They are babies and toddlers who were born very recently in the United States to asylum seekers.

Surely the member opposite is not suggesting that we tear these infants from their mothers' arms and incarcerate them in cages.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would love to have a debate about the integrity and the well functioning of our immigration system.

What just came out of the minister's mouth was beyond reproach. We should be trying to come up with a solution to bring back the integrity of our asylum claim system.

Will the minister apologize for the rhetoric and hyperbole that he just put forward in this House of Commons? Will he close the loophole in Canada's safe third country agreement?

The Speaker: Order, order. I think I may have mentioned, once or twice, that sometimes members will hear things they do not like, but I would ask them to remember that only one person should be speaking at a time, and we try not to react to what we hear until it is our turn to speak. That is the time when one gets to react.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would never apologize for standing up for children, for standing up for families, for standing up for a compassionate response to those who are fleeing persecution and danger.

We have a proud tradition in this country of being a welcoming country to those who are legitimately seeking refuge. We will continue to provide and uphold Canadian law and Canadian values in that system.

To suggest for a moment that people should be removed simply because, as toddlers, they happened to hold American citizenship by virtue of where they were born, is—

● (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about standing up for the rights of victims. Earlier in question period, the Prime Minister said, point-blank, that he would not answer a question.

He would not answer a question, and yet Christopher Garnier, who has never served a day in his life in Canada's military, who killed a female police officer and unceremoniously dumped her body under a bridge, is getting benefits from Veterans Affairs.

The Prime Minister needs to have the courage to stand up and answer this question right now. Does he believe that Christopher Garnier should be receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of Constable Campbell. I always have to say this and I never like saying it, but it is important. For privacy reasons, I cannot get into the case.

However, I made it very clear, and I think many people in this House made it very clear, how uncomfortable they were with this whole situation. I have asked the department to go back and provide me with a better understanding of how this decision was made.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question about Kinder Morgan and the duty to consult indigenous peoples, the Prime Minister said that the process was adequate, but that they had to do a little bit more. The Federal Court of Appeal said that "Canada fell well short of the minimum requirements imposed by...the Supreme Court of Canada." I have news for him. His little bit more will not be enough.

Does he realize that imposing a pipeline on first nations is not an act of reconciliation?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that we take the Federal Court of Appeal's decision very seriously. We are currently examining it. There is no doubt that we must consult indigenous peoples, as it is a legal duty under the Constitution. We are currently reviewing this decision and will have more to say in the days to come.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is the price of a political vendetta? Well, if one is the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations fighting the survivors of St. Anne's residential school, one will spend $2.3 million, millions spent on every brutal legal tactic, on every procedural weapon, even targeting their pro bono lawyer to intimidate them into silence. I was with the minister when she met the survivors and they wept openly asking her to end her vendetta.

How can she look them in the eyes and break her word?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed for justice for all the survivors of Indian residential schools. More than 90% have received compensation. There are a few cases that, as the member knows, were difficult to settle. In one of the cases, Justice Perell has stated that counsel's "repeated and deliberate attack on the integrity of this Court threatens to interfere with the administration of justice." We remain committed to bring closure for all survivors.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the former fisheries minister stood in this House and completely deceived Canadians, and through his inaction, the Prime Minister is complicit in this deception. The minister has said that there was no financial gain to his family, yet the Ethics Commissioner found that the minister's "decision provided an opportunity to further the private interest of Mr. Thériault", the minister's family. The commissioner added that his "compensation by the company depended on it being granted the licence."

Why does the Prime Minister sit silent and allow his minister to mislead Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner's report states there was no preferential treatment given. We cannot say the same about the conduct of the member for Haldimand—Norfolk who, when in cabinet, gave preferential treatment by funding a project connected with the Conservative Party after her own department had ruled it was ineligible for federal funding.

The Conservatives are in no position to lecture our government.

● (1440)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard was caught red-handed but is acting as though nothing happened. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is saying that the minister is completely at fault, but he does not seem worried. No one is above the law or the rules established by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

When will there be real consequences for the Liberals' total lack of ethics?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the commissioner indicated in his report, no preferential treatment was given in this case. However, since the

Conservatives have a short memory, I will remind my colleague opposite that Prime Minister Harper's chief of staff was found guilty by the commissioner after writing a personal cheque for $90,000 to a senator to try to hide their corruption.

Our government does not need any lectures from the members opposite.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer the Prime Minister admitted that his carbon tax would harm Canadian business when he cut a special deal for large companies, yet he still is forcing small businesses and Canadian families to pay this unfair tax. He continues to ignore the concerns of my province by rejecting a "made in Saskatchewan" plan to address climate change. The carbon tax kills jobs, makes life more expensive for families and does nothing for the environment.

Will the Prime Minister now admit that his entire carbon tax scheme is a failure?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a commitment to protect the environment and grow the economy at the same time. I note that just last night the National Post is reporting that even Stephen Harper's former director of policy is indicating that our government's plan is going to provide a net benefit to Canadian families. It is disappointing in the extreme that the member opposite would dip into the pockets of her constituents so they can make pollution free again.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the Prime Minister's summer of failure, I was hosting meetings in every corner of my riding and listening to the concerns of my constituents. What they told me is that they cannot afford a carbon tax. Small business owners, manufacturers, seniors, single moms and farmers are all tired of their taxes being raised by the Liberal government.

When will the government stop helping its Liberal insiders and start to focus on making life more affordable for middle-class families in southern Ontario?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are making life more affordable for Canadians and more expensive for polluters. If people do not believe me, they can ask the former director of policy to Stephen Harper, who indicated that our plan is going to result in a net benefit for Canadian households.

We are protecting the environment and growing the economy at the same time. Since we were elected and came into office, the economy has added half a million jobs and emissions are going down. We are on the right track and I would suggest, if he is interested in protecting the pockets of his constituents, he get on board with our plan.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost a million kilometres of oil pipeline criss-cross this country, going through virtually every town and city, and last year we saw a 41% increase in pipeline spills. For B.C., it was the worst year in a decade. Now we learn from a shocking new report from the NEB admitting that it learned about hundreds of faulty pipeline parts three years ago. These parts will "expand or break" under pressure.

I have a simple question for the Liberal government. When will all the faulty pipeline parts be replaced and does it even know if any of them exist in that wonderful 65-year-old leaky pipeline it bought on our behalf?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, getting resources to market is the fundamental responsibility of any government, but that must be done with the highest regard for safety and the protection of the environment. The 2016 Pipeline Safety Act that we brought in strengthens Canada's pipeline safety system. We have also invested $17.4 million in the National Energy Board to enhance pipeline oversight and monitoring activities. We promised Canadians we would restore trust in our regulatory processes. This is a step to ensure Canada maintains the highest safety standards for federally regulated pipelines.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it feels like *Groundhog Day*. The Conservative Party leader is begging the Prime Minister to bring back energy east. He might do it, even though most Quebeckers are strongly opposed to the proposal. Why listen to people and protect our rivers when friends in the oil industry make such hefty donations? Those two are like two peas in a pod. I can barely tell them apart.

Can we get a promise from the Prime Minister, right here, right now, that he will never put the insane energy east proposal back on the table?

● (1445)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government firmly supports the energy sector because it creates good middle-class jobs. TransCanada made an operational decision, and now it is up to its representatives to decide on next steps. The government's decision-making process has not changed. Our government would have used the same assessment process for the energy east pipeline as it did for other major projects that were approved.

* * *

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, family reunification is a priority for this Liberal government. Under the Conservatives' mismanagement, we saw Canadians wait years in ballooning backlogs to reunite with their wives, husbands, parents and grandparents. In my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, I have seen over the past years great progress in reducing these Conservative backlogs.

Can the minister inform this House of our recent changes to the parents and grandparents program?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler for his work on this issue.

[*English*]

Our government is making real progress in cutting backlogs and reducing wait times for Canadians who wish to reunite with their family members. We have quadrupled the number of spaces available for Canadians to sponsor their parents and grandparents, we have cut the backlog that we inherited from the Harper Conservatives by 80% and we have introduced a more fair application process. The Liberal government continues to deliver an immigration system that works for all Canadians, including families and employers.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will not answer and the Minister of Veterans Affairs just told this House that he has asked his officials for answers, but the minister already promised veterans answers three weeks ago. To be clear, that murderer killed her, put her body in a compost bin and dumped her under a bridge.

Does the Prime Minister really believe that this cop killer deserves benefits from Veterans Affairs?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will say that there are many of us who are uncomfortable with the decision that was made. One thing I will not back down on, though, and I do believe firmly in, is that we will look after not just the veteran but the family members of the veteran.

In this case, I have asked that the department go back and review the decision for me to look at.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to answer the question and the minister needs to stop covering for him.

Garnier never served a day of his life in Canada's military, but is receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs. Yesterday and today, the Prime Minister justified those payments. Does the Prime Minister actually believe that murderer should be receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs? They are the decision-makers.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my answer stands, but let me take advantage of this opportunity because there was something that came out in this story about PTSD, that this was depriving people with PTSD of their right to get treatment.

Let me assure the House that is never the case. If people raise their hand and need treatment for PTSD, they will receive that treatment in 96% of cases. In fact, we do not even wait for approval. We will make sure they receive mental health care right away. If people need help, they should put their hand up and we will be there for them.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Christopher Garnier claims he got PTSD because he killed a police officer. That is the issue here. Again, the Prime Minister continues to dodge the question. Veterans Affairs gave benefits to that convicted cop killer. Garnier never served a day in the Canadian Armed Forces in his life, yet he is collecting benefits while he serves time in prison.

Does the Prime Minister actually believe that Chris Garnier should be receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs Canada?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are privacy issues around this case and I am not going to take it any further.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Christopher Garnier brutally killed police officer Catherine Campbell of Truro, Nova Scotia. He was found guilty of murder. He never served a day of his life in Canada's military, yet the Prime Minister, the leader of our country, keeps justifying the fact that Veterans Affairs is paying for Garnier's benefits. This is sickening.

Does the Prime Minister actually believe that Chris Garnier should be receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs? I urge him to please do what is right.

● (1450)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I have asked my officials to go back to review the judgment and to come back to me with that review.

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[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that his government will always defend Canadian values and human rights around the world. According to a recent Ipsos poll, more than four in five Canadians do not want their government to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, specifically because of the human rights issue. Those Canadians want to know how the government can keep saying it respects human rights while selling weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to creating a stronger and more rigorous arms export control system through Bill C-47. As the member opposite knows, the contract for those vehicles was signed in 2014, and all the major parties, including the NDP, agreed to respect that contract during the last election campaign. Canadian businesses and workers and our international partners need to know that an agreement with Canada still means something after an election.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for last June's G7 meeting, the RCMP reserved 420 room nights at the Cepal Inn in Jonquière. For nearly 100 days, the manager, Edith, has been trying to recover the $57,000 the federal government owes her, but to no avail. That is a huge amount to a small business. The government seems to have mismanaged its G7 so badly that it cannot even pay its suppliers.

How many other SMEs are in the same situation? Will the minister commit to fixing this, respecting the contract, and paying the Cepal Inn?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sure to look into this problem and get back to the House with an answer.

* * *

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are being hit hard by the trade war with the United States, but the Liberals have left them out of the tariff relief fund. The conditions for businesses to qualify are ridiculous. Companies applying have to have over 200 employees and sales of over $10 million.

The Liberals are leaving virtually all small business owners behind. Why do the Liberals only care about the companies that can afford high-priced lobbyists? When will this attack on small businesses end?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put in place measures with our neighbour to the south during these challenging times, to aid small businesses in a variety of different industries. Those measures are tailored to help businesses to innovate and move forward. We will continue to work in that direction, to aid our small businesses and our major industries at the same time.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister refused to answer a question. He is always saying he is going to stand up to violence against women. A female cop has been viciously murdered, and the person who murdered her is now receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs.

Does the Prime Minister really think that is standing up to violence against women?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Veterans Affairs has answered the questions specific to the case that my colleagues have brought up.

As far as violence against women goes, after 150 years of Confederation, we introduced the first strategy to address and prevent gender-based violence. Close to $200 million has been invested. We are working to support survivors and their families, prevent this from happening and ensure that our justice and legal systems are more responsive.

It is wonderful to see that colleagues from the opposite side are on board with our plan.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what we know in this House today. The Prime Minister will not stand up and answer the question about the murderer who is collecting benefits that are targeted for veterans, not for someone who has not served in the military. This was a 30-year-old healthy individual who decided to murder an innocent woman and throw her under a bridge. The minister promised three and a half weeks ago to dig into this matter and find out what is going on. How long does it take to get an answer?

● (1455)

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stood in this House and answered the first time the question was asked. However, as the level of debate sank, and as the level of political gains got torqued up by the Conservatives around a terrible, tragic, reprehensible incident, I chose not to encourage them. At one point, Canadians are going to help the Conservatives understand that they should not play these disgusting political games the way they do.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, children and adults who share a name with someone on the no-fly list can be stigmatized and delayed by secondary screenings while trying to travel. The Conservatives failed to do anything to help Canadians from being falsely flagged as security risks while travelling. Can the Minister of Public Safety tell us what he is doing to replace the system put in place by the previous Conservative government?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the frustration of families with no-fly kids. By definition, no children are on Canada's secure air travel list. However, worrisome adults with similar names are, and that creates the false positives.

When the system was first implemented, the previous government should have recognized this problem and provided unique identification numbers for automatic redress. However, it did not. The Conservative design failed. We now have $81 million to fix it. First and foremost, we need the legal authority to do so. That is in Bill C-59 and Bill C-21. Both bills need to be passed as quickly as possible.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister started off question period by saying he would not answer a question, and the answer he just gave my colleague was disgusting.

A woman was murdered by a man who did not serve a day in Canada's military, and he is receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs. The Prime Minister needs to stand up and be accountable for his values. Does he honestly believe that a murderer who has never served a day in Canada's military should be receiving PTSD benefits from Veterans Affairs?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the family of Constable Campbell, can we simply let this debate rest for now? I have asked my officials to review the decision. I have asked them to get back to me. Can we please let it rest there?

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the Penelakut First Nation in my riding wrote to the Prime Minister to express anger and disappointment that the federal government continues to use—

The Speaker: Order. I have to ask the member for Lakeland not to be yelling when we are trying to hear someone else's question.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the Penelakut First Nation in my riding wrote to the Prime Minister to express anger and disappointment that the federal government continues to use its traditional territory as a parking lot for freighters. These anchorages were created without any consultation or consent from Penelakut people, and they will take legal action if the government does not respond today.

The Prime Minister claims no relationship is more important than that with indigenous peoples. Therefore, will he immediately order the removal of these anchorages, or is he prepared to fight another first nation again in court?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no relationship is more important than our relationship with indigenous peoples. As members know, the port of Vancouver is an extremely busy port. We have a lot of ships coming through the port of Vancouver, and we have had to find temporary anchorage points. We are in a period of a one-year interim study to find a better solution. At the moment we have to find places for these ships to anchor; we are trying to do it by respecting indigenous and local communities.

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I have seen just how much women continue to be disproportionately affected by economic insecurity.

The poverty rate among Canada's indigenous women is three times higher than that of non-indigenous women. Improving economic security for women, including indigenous women, is essential to keeping our economy strong and growing.

Can the Minister of Status of Women tell the House what measures our government is taking so that everyone, regardless of their sex, has a real and equitable chance to succeed?

● (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to colleagues like the member for Saint-Laurent, our government's plan to grow the middle class and support those working hard to join it is working. That plan includes supporting and funding hundreds of organizations across the country to enhance the financial and physical security of all women, including indigenous women.

[*Translation*]

Indigenous women are strong and resilient. When we invest, we improve life for families and communities.

[*English*]

We are working hard to close the gender wage gap so that we can unlock $150 billion in our economy, grow the GDP by 4% and support a strong middle class.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Prime Minister does not like answering questions during question period, but it is his job, and it is our job to ask challenging questions that deal with important issues of public policy. Therefore, when we ask the Prime Minister if a murderer who is not a veteran should be able to get Veterans Affairs benefits and he says we should not be asking that question, that is what is disgusting. That shows a fundamental disrespect for this place and for our job.

Does the Minister of Veterans Affairs or the Prime Minister think, aside from the particulars of the case, that someone who is not a veteran should receive Veterans Affairs benefits? Should a non-veteran get the benefits?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the department to get back to me with a review of the decision.

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives decided to invest Quebeckers' money in Muskrat Falls. The Liberals decided to invest twice as much. Now we are stuck with a $14-billion white elephant. According to the commission of inquiry into the cost overruns at Muskrat Falls, the project turned into a monumental boondoggle because it was approved too quickly, without any serious study and with inconceivable negligence.

Why is the government wasting Quebeckers' money on a project that competes with Hydro-Québec?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government supports the construction of infrastructure projects across the country. We have announced loan guarantees for Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that this project moves ahead. We must always work with the provinces to ensure that infrastructure projects move forward. We will continue to work with the provinces to ensure that energy projects are profitable and moving forward in an appropriate way.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc has always said that Quebeckers will end up paying for this megaproject, which is not in Quebec's national interest. The government confirmed today that it is going to waste public money on this monumental boondoggle. The question is, how? In an interview with CBC, the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that there is a lot going on behind the scenes.

In the interest of transparency and honesty towards Quebeckers, can the Minister of Finance tell us the nature of these behind-the-scenes transactions?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we must work with the provinces on major energy projects like Muskrat Falls. We have worked with Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that this project is sustainable and creates good jobs. It is clear that investing in and working with the provinces is a priority for our government. We will continue to do that.

* * *

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is a member in this place who does not suffer for the long-standing unresolved issues for Kashechewan. That community has suffered too long. Their students came here to Ottawa this week to plead for a new school.

My question would be to the Prime Minister. However, our Minister of Indigenous Services, who I must say is hard-working and compassionate, said to that community, "if your community wants to be moved, I will do everything in my power to make it possible." Will the Prime Minister make it so?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to collaborate with the Kashechewan first nation on their priorities. In March 2017, we signed a framework agreement with the Government of Ontario and Kashechewan First Nation to support the health and safety of the community. This work is ongoing and includes an action plan that reflects the community's culture, priorities and options for relocation.

A site feasibility study is currently under way. We will continue to work closely with the community on the next steps in this process.

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● (1505)

SITUATION OF THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House:

(a) endorse the findings of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar that crimes against humanity have been committed by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities and that these horrific acts were sanctioned at the highest levels of the Myanmar military chain of command;

(b) recognize that these crimes against the Rohingya constitute genocide;

(c) welcome the recent decision of the International Criminal Court that it has jurisdiction over the forced deportation of members of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh;

(d) call on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court;

(e) call for senior officials in the Myanmar military chain of command to be investigated and prosecuted for the crime of genocide.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise on behalf of the opposition House leader to ask the usual Thursday question of the government House leader. Would the government House leader please inform the House what the schedule is for the next week?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will continue third reading debate of Bill C-71, the firearms legislation. Tomorrow, we will have second reading debate of Bill C-77, the victims bill of rights.

[*Translation*]

On Monday, we will return to the second reading of Bill C-81, an act to ensure a barrier-free Canada. We also hope to start debating Bill C-78.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind members of the Standing Order that provides that members are not to walk between the person who is speaking and the Chair. I would ask members to respect that order.

The hon. government House leader.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, we hope to begin debate on Bill C-78, an act to amend the Divorce Act, the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act and to make consequential amendments to another act, next week.

Next Tuesday and Thursday will be allotted days.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on Thursday, November 8, 2018, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, November 19, 2018, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, the House shall be deemed to have sat on Friday, November 9, 2018.

The Speaker: Does the Leader of the Government in the House have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

FIREARMS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey Centre has five minutes remaining in debate, and then five minutes of questions and comments.

The hon. member for Surrey Centre.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-71 the government is proposing measures to require firearms businesses to retain inventory and transfer records related to non-restricted firearms. Many ask why we are targeting legal gun owners, that they are not the bad guys. They are not, but I can tell members that 60% to 70% of the guns used in gang violence are domestically sourced, either by theft or by purchasing them through vendors who are wilfully blind when selling their firearms.

Bill C-71 would strengthen the due diligence practices, support the tracing of firearms for criminal investigations and help to ensure that only those properly licenced to own a firearm can acquire one.

The ability to trace firearms can help police save time and resources when conducting criminal investigations. It can generate investigative leads, for example, that link suspects to firearms discovered at crime scenes. Identifying the last legal owner of a firearm could also help to expedite those investigations. It could help to build evidence to secure a conviction and potentially identify firearms trafficking networks. These records would be kept by the businesses selling the firearm.

On that point, I am pleased to say that a further amendment at committee stage clarifies, in no uncertain terms, that this would not create any kind of firearms registry. Keeping records is already a common practice among many Canadian firearms businesses. Bill C-71 would make the practice mandatory.

Access to those records by law enforcement would follow standard procedures, including seeking judicial authorizations, where appropriate. It is another tool in the toolbox for the proud men and women on the front lines who work every day to combat the gun violence in our communities. It is on top of strengthened rules around classification and transportation of firearms, which has been discussed at length already.

All of these new measures represent sensible and practical new steps that we can take to enhance public safety while remaining respectful and fair to legal firearms owners. However, now that we have reached third reading, I think it is an opportune time to address some of the questions we have heard around timing should this bill become law.

Several members have asked why only a few elements of Bill C-71 would come into force immediately. Many provisions can only come into force at a later date due to operational and informatics system changes that must be made prior to implementation. This includes the repeal of the deeming provisions and grandfathering of affected owners, and the building of an online portal to facilitate licence verification, as a few examples. As we prepare to get this bill ready for scrutiny by the other place, we would do well to keep issues of timing in mind.

These changes are long overdue. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police said that it "is encouraged by the positive direction taken by (the government) towards sensible firearms legislation, enhancing the tools available to police to ensure public safety."

The government promised change, and through this proposed legislation it has delivered. Thanks in no small part to the committee and House scrutiny, Bill C-71 is deserving of our full support.

● (1510)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, near the end of the member's speech, he said that we would do well to keep the issue of crime in mind. On this side of the House, we could not agree more; we need to keep that in mind. However, there is a big flaw in Bill C-71, in that it does not deal with gangs and violent crime; it does not deal with the fact that many of these guns are sourced illegally by theft. What we need is something that will cause the Canadian public to be more safe.

I met with a number of people at shooting ranges this summer, and talked about safety and training regulations and the background checks. They are eager to comply with all of the existing laws. However, to a person, they said that this particular bill, while it gives the impression of increasing the safety of the Canadian public, would do absolutely nothing on that. If we add to that Bill C-75, with the weakening of many of the sentences for some very violent crimes, such as joining a terrorist group and gangs, these are giving the wrong message.

I ask my colleague if this exercise we are going through today is simply an exercise in public relations to try to assure us that the Canadian public is safer with this law, when in fact it would do nothing to increase safety but in the process target many law-abiding citizens.

● (1515)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, it is a tool in the tool chest. As the chiefs of police have stated, this is an important tool in the fight against gun and gang violence. It is not the only solution. It will require a comprehensive plan, prevention, intervention, suppression, legislation and gun control.

However, this is one very important step to stop that leak. I was on the mayor's gang task force in my riding of Surrey. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police told us that up to 70% of the guns used in these violent crimes were legally sourced originally. We need to be able to track them. We need to find out which vendors are turning a blind eye and which vendors are selling them.

Ninety-nine percent of good gun owners will not be affected. They are not the bad guys. They are not the ones we are chasing. We have to plug the hole for those who are breaching the law, who are misusing these loopholes and who are giving guns to those who should not have guns.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a big deal has been made today about this background check, which is already very extensive. For example, I just got my non-registered and registered PAL this last weekend. When the paperwork goes into the RCMP, it will have 45 days to assess whether I am suitable to purchase a weapon.

Exactly how is the RCMP going to ascertain whether someone has a mental health issue that should preclude the person from purchasing a weapon? Could the member explain that?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, this is just one of the aspects.

There will be a check to see if there have been any previous court orders, or any threats, any threats online, or if there have been any orders that perhaps pertain to mental health on the record, through child services or court orders or custody orders. If those are there, that can be a tool used to assess the mental ability of one to have a firearm.

This does give more breadth, more tools to the chief firearms officer to ascertain whether someone has the right to possess a firearm. It will make it harder for those who have challenges with respect to keeping a firearm and those who should not have them in the first place.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, this discussion gets down to the fact that we talk about illegal firearms and legal firearms. Could the member across the way tell me how many of these crimes in the statistics involved the use of illegal firearms?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that 60% are from guns that were obtained in Canada from licensed gun owners, but perhaps obtained illegally or by theft, and that only 40% were those that were from across the border in the U.S.

The perception is that all of these guns are coming in illicitly from foreign means, when in fact most jurisdictions are stating that 60% of the guns were domestically sourced, either by theft from legal gun owners or by means of guns sales that were from those who turned a wilful blind eye.

Mr. Scott Simms: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to get clarification on the routine we have here during questions and comments. A question came from that side twice, I believe, and then it came back here. However, I think there were three in total. In that way—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the member's comments. Unfortunately, there was a change in the Speakers, and I did not quite know who had spoken first. I will be very mindful during the rounds. I apologize if someone else got recognized.

The other thing I want to do is remind the member that when a member on the government side is making a speech, the questions generally go to the opposition to allow for that debate, as the member will remember. Especially within the 10-minute time frame, the same party will get one question, unless other people do not get up.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

● (1520)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I rise today to defend my fellow Canadians' rights to own and enjoy private property, in this case firearms. I oppose any efforts by the Liberal Party that would lead to another useless, wasteful long-gun registry, and I do so on behalf of my constituents and the tens of thousands of Canadians who are without representation from their local MPs on this issue.

I spent the summer listening and hearing what citizens from across Canada had to say.

One of the myths perpetrated by the urban media is that there is uniform support for a gun registry in Quebec. That may be true in urban Montreal, but that is not true in rural Quebec. Rural Canadians, regardless of whether they are English or French speaking, are united in their opposition to a wasteful, useless gun registry.

The Upper Ottawa Valley enjoys a long and historic relationship with people on both sides of the river, Ontario and Quebec.

Hunters from Quebec tell me one of the reasons François Legault and the CAQ are polling so well in Quebec in that provincial election, particularly in rural ridings and among Francophones, is because of the decision by the Quebec Liberal Party to bring in a provincial long-gun firearms registry.

In the Upper Ottawa Valley, opposition in the Pontiac to the return of a Liberal long-gun registry has brought attention to a very historic wrong that must now be addressed.

The Canada-Ontario Boundary Act, 1889, legislation that was subsequently enshrined in the Constitution of Canada when the Constitution was repatriated in 1982, clearly situates the Ottawa River Islands of Allumette and Calumet in the province of Ontario.

This fact was confirmed by the Minister of Natural Resources Surveyor General of Canada in the House on January 21, 2016, when he stated in response to a question I placed on the Order Paper:

> As stated in the Canada (Ontario Boundary) Act, 1889, the middle of the main channel still delineates the boundary between Ontario and Quebec. The main channel of the Ottawa River today may be different than that shown on the map of the Ottawa Ship Canal Survey by Walter Shanly, C.E.; nevertheless, it does not change the interprovincial boundary.

The people who live on Calumet and Allumette Islands in the Ottawa River, according to the Constitution of Canada, are legally residents of Ontario. However, Quebec is claiming ownership and enforcing its laws on island residents. Firearm owners on those islands have a legal right to refuse to register their firearms with the Quebec provincial government.

The Government of Canada has a constitutional obligation to protect the rights of the citizens who live on those islands. They do not want to be subject to the Quebec gun registry just because no one has bothered to correct the mapping error.

This error has been magnified by Bill C-71, which is why it has now become an urgent and pressing issue. Lawful firearms owners know that the Quebec gun registry could be used by other provinces as a template. These efforts by the federal government to introduce a backdoor long-gun registry through a province must be stopped in its tracks.

This is a test.

If the Prime Minister is sincere about his respect for the Constitution, he will protect the rights of the Canadian citizens who live on Allumette and Calumet Islands. No more virtue signalling about the notwithstanding clause. Bill C-71 is his problem that he created with this border crisis. Now we have to deal with it.

How appropriate, after the Prime Minister's summer of failure, he would focus on a piece of divisive legislation to divert attention from his summer of failures, with the Gerald Butts culture wars policy of dividing Canadians rather than dealing with real issues.

Let us keep this simple.

● (1525)

Bill C-71 is a knee-jerk response to a problem that does not exist. Law-abiding farmers and hunters are not the problem; criminal behaviour is. Let us quit rewarding criminal behaviour with soft penalties and watch the crime rates drop in Toronto. Let us withdraw Bill C-75 along with Bill C-71. It is as simple as that.

A summer of failure is one spent listening, but not actually hearing constituents and what they were trying to tell members. They were trying to tell the Liberals that this was bad legislation. For one-term members of the House, like the members for Northumberland—Peterborough South and the Bay of Quinte, third reading of legislation, coming after report stage, is when parliamentarians, after listening to their constituents, make amendments to respond to their concerns.

Clearly, government members of the House, who will have to answer directly to voters on behalf of their party, have been too busy not listening to actually hear what the constituents in their ridings have to say about banning firearms. Banning firearms because they might look scary or misleading the public about banning assault weapons when the public has been prohibited from owning assault weapons for over 20 years will not solve Toronto's gun violence.

The members for Northumberland—Peterborough South, Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Thunder Bay, Kenora, Nipissing—Timiskaming, and Yukon should ask to speak to the Liberal MP I defeated. Maybe he will them what happens to MPs when they support a useless, wasteful gun registry or talk about banning firearms because they look scary.

I can confirm for the benefit of the one-term member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington that his constituents were given the now false impression that he would be proposing a whole series of amendments to Bill C-71, the act to harass law-abiding Canadians who happen to enjoy Canadian heritage activities like hunting.

The member for Thunder Bay—Superior North should know that her constituents, who contacted me, thought Bill C-71 would be withdrawn. After alienating a large segment of voters in her riding, penalizing people of faith by demanding a humiliating loyalty attestation oath and taking away funding for student summer jobs, I can assure her that people who enjoy outdoor activities in her riding are an even larger segment of the population to alienate as we enter this final year before a federal election is called.

I understand the Prime Minister is too preoccupied, in his summer of failure, giving 4.5 billion Canadian tax dollars to Texas billionaires to build pipelines in the U.S. and losing manufacturing jobs in the auto sector to listen to the concerns of average middle-class Canadians.

While Liberal MPs might have spent the summer hearing complaints about their government and Bill C-71, the fact this legislation is being rammed through the House demonstrates how ineffectual they are. We know individual Liberal MPs are being ignored by their own party, thanks to the insight provided by the newest member of the Conservative caucus. I take this opportunity to welcome the newest member of the Conservative caucus, the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. The member's frustration that led her to cross the floor was not being listened to.

The arrogant, elitist party hierarchy led by technocrat Gerald Butts, whose extreme leftist experiments crashed the Toronto Liberal Party so hard, is no longer recognized as an official party in the Ontario legislature. I can assure the government members who I mentioned that their constituents shared their frustration with me over Bill C-71.

Unlike the members opposite, as I always do, I spent my summer listening to my constituents. I hear what they have to say, and I represent their interests in Parliament, as I am doing today.

I thank all the members of the Madawaska Valley Fish & Game Club; the Ottawa River Sportsman Club; the Eganville & District Sportsman's Club, which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary; and the Pembroke Outdoors Sports Club, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary. They shared their concerns, signed petitions, attended information sessions and educated their fellow citizens. They recognize that banning handguns is just one step away from banning hunting rifles.

A gun ban will be another costly failure to add to all the other costly failures of the government, like paying $4.5 billion for a pipeline that ends up giving wealthy Texas oilman Kinder Morgan chairman Richard Kinder a profit of 637% on that fire sale.

● (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-71, simply put, is another commitment from the last federal election being fulfilled by the Prime Minister.

The Conservatives are out of touch with what Canadians really feel are important issues. The member across the way started by accusing the government of bringing in a registry. That is just not true. Even a Conservative amendment to the bill that was accepted, adopted and passed said that the bill had nothing to do with a registry. That was actually passed, yet she continues to spread misinformation about the content of this bill.

Does the member believe that members of Parliament should be straightforward with their constituents and not try to apply something that is just not true?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is trying to play Canadians as fools. They know that when the date, time, model, make, address and personal information of person purchasing a firearm are matched with a vendor, the information is put into a database, and it is not too difficult to match it across other purchases. By virtue of doing so, they are able to construct another useless, wasteful long-gun registry, and other other registries. A hand gun registry has been in existence since the 1930s and so-called assault weapons have been prohibited for over 20 years. Saying they are going to ban assault weapons is a total farce.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member began her speech by saying that the people of Pontiac, which is just across the Ottawa River, along with everyone else in Quebec and all francophones, are against gun control. That is utterly ridiculous.

I represent the riding just south of Pontiac on the other side of the Ottawa River, and I can say in no uncertain terms that people in Quebec are strongly in favour of the reasonable measures in this bill. My colleague's speech completely misrepresented the intention underlying Bill C-71. I do not understand why she keeps saying things that are just not true. I suppose she cannot help her conditioning.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, the distortion is the ruse that Bill C-71 is actually going to do something to curb gun violence. I can tell the member opposite that members from his constituency and all along the Pontiac come to my office so they can have a member of Parliament who will actually listen to their concerns.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for pointing out the complete lack of integrity in this whole argument of trying to make it look like Canadians will be safer with this Bill C-71, while at the same time the government is putting forward Bill C-75, which would reduce sentences. However, she mentioned toward the end of her speech the idea of a ban on assault rifles, which, as she already pointed out, have been banned for many years.

I would just like to quote the member for Scarborough—Guildwood who said, "I don't think I speak out of turn when I say that there is no tolerance for people having guns in Toronto, period —long guns, short guns, in-between guns, fast guns, slow guns". This statement by the chair of the committee that studied this legislation shows a complete lack of understanding of the issues.

Therefore, does my colleague think that the Liberals are actually on track to try to ban all guns in Canada?

● (1535)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, in visiting most of the gun clubs across my riding and in other ridings, people there tell me that Bill C-71 bans some firearms. They know it will be these firearms now, and then it will be more firearms, because this is not being done based on how a firearm actually operates. It is based on cosmetics. First, it will be the semi-automatics and then it will go to plain rifles. People know that is the ultimate goal of the Liberals.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to think that preventing violence against any Canadian is a goal that everyone in the House would share. It is laudable when we have debates about how to ensure that is the case. The unfortunate thing about Bill C-71 and its subsequent journey through committee and now at the stage of debate we are at is that the government would be very hard pressed to point out statistically any one part of the bill that would actually make Canadians safer.

There were a couple of articles published by Global News in the last month. One was entitled, "A fair gun control debate requires accurate firearms facts". Another published on September 6 was entitled, "Data shows that Toronto's gun 'surge' never happened". These two articles are really important because they underscore the fact that any member on the government side in this place would be hard pressed to stand in the House and take any part of the bill and show how it would materially reduce violence in Canada. That, to me, is a waste of parliamentary time.

I could stand here and talk about numerous ways that would demonstrably reduce violence in Canada. If we want to talk about firearms violence, it is very important that we set the parameters of what firearms violence looks like in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, only three per cent, and I want to preface this by saying this number should be zero, but only three per cent of violent crime in Canada is related to a firearm.

Considering that statistic, we need to look at some of the claims my colleagues have made about violence against women. As Statistics Canada indicated today, patterns in weapons used in injury largely reflect the fact that common assault was the predominant offence against intimate partners. In the majority of incidents, some 70% of them, the perpetrator used their own physical force rather than a weapon to threaten or cause injury to a victim. In another 13% of incidents, the perpetrator used a weapon, while in 17% of the incidents no weapon was used.

The following is going to be a very unpopular statistic, but I am going to read it verbatim from Statistics Canada:

> Given the greater use of weapons against men and the higher tendency for injury among incidents involving weapons...male victims were slightly more likely than female victims to suffer physical injury (55% versus 52%). Minor injuries accounted for this gender difference, with 53% of male victims sustaining minor physical injuries and 50% of female victims. There was no gender difference in major injury or death, as male and female victims of intimate partner violence were equally as likely to either die or experience a physical injury requiring professional medical attention....

If we drill down into the statistics, we can start talking about the causes and how we address them. Our former Conservative government invested millions of dollars directly toward programs to work with men and other groups to prevent and identify the causes of violence. My former colleague, Rona Ambrose, was Status of Women minister at the time and this was one of her big passions. She spoke all the time and worked day after day to create programs to ensure that we were preventing violence. My colleagues who were with the Minister of Justice also put forward legislation to penalize those who perpetrated this type of violence so that it would become a deterrent to people engaging in these types of behaviour, so we are looking at both ends of the coin.

The bill does none of that. It does not do anything to reduce incidents of violence. Why? It is because we know that, first of all, Canada is not the United States. The government is desperately trying to import the American debate into Canada, and that is just not the case. I am a law-abiding firearms owner. I have both my standard possession and acquisition licence, as well as my restricted possession and acquisition licences. It took me over a year to do that, from the day I decided to become a firearms owner to the day I actually became one. I had to go through an exceptional amount of training, testing, and vetting as well. It was very detailed screening. Once I did become a firearms owner, it took a long time to transfer the firearm into my possession even after this licensing process. Today, I am subject to daily vetting by the RCMP. I am also subject to very strict laws on how I transport my firearms and for the purposes they are used.

● (1540)

Therefore, under that system in Canada, the statistics show that a law-abiding firearm owner, someone who owns a firearm under our legal system in Canada, is three times less likely than a member of the general population to commit a firearm-related offence. Those are the statistics, so if we look at the statistics we have to start looking at when firearms-related violence happens and how prevent it.

Going back to the articles I mentioned, especially the one entitled "Data shows that Toronto's gun 'surge' never happened", there were statistics going around that 50% of the guns were from legal sources. That is not even close to the real statistic. It was debunked by the article.

I am going to back up. The RCMP does not even consistently track where guns come from, so we should have been looking first to get better data. However, the data we do have shows an overwhelming majority of firearms used in violence are illegally sourced, and most of those are smuggled from the United States. Therefore, I do not understand why the government would not have first sought to table legislation that would have shown how it planned to better detect firearms coming in from the United States, and then have stronger penalties for those who would seek to do so.

There is so much misinformation out here. It is already a significant offence to illegally obtain a handgun or a firearm of any sort and sell it to someone who does not have a licence. That is actually an offence at this point in time.

We could be talking about all sorts of things, like better enforcement and stronger penalties, but the government is just so concerned about making symbolic gestures. The parliamentary secretary to the House leader in his last question said something to the effect of why would we take something to our constituents if it were just not true?

With regard to the component in Bill C-71 dealing with the authorization to transport, I was reading some testimony from a Dr. Caillin Langmann. I asked if there been any firearm-related violence associated with how the current ATT system, the authorization to transport system, worked. This was his testimony in response:

> There is currently no empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the ATT. The fact is that the vast majority of legitimate gun owners do not use their firearms for illegal purposes let alone to cause harm.

That is true. I understand the great responsibility I bear in handling my firearms responsibly and the penalties I would incur if I were not doing that correctly. There is no way I am going to break those rules. That is why the statistics show that people who own firearms legally, those who use them legally as tools on their farms and in rural communities for hunting, people who are sports shooters—and that is the only legal reason, for all intents and purposes, that people can own a handgun in Canada—are not the ones we need to worry about.

Someone in my city, an alleged gang leader, who had used an illegally obtained firearm to shoot people walked away from criminal penalties after doing so, scot-free, because the government had not appointed judges and Jordan's principle was applied to his case. Why is the government not appointing judges? Why did it put forward Bill C-75, a bill that waters down penalties for serious violent crime, and gang related crime? Why are we not increasing those penalties?

Furthermore, if we want to take a more liberal view, which I rarely do, the government put a lot of money into a consultation process in which it announced it was going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on preventing gang violence, and it has allocated virtually none of that, even though it has spent billions of dollars on other things that are completely useless.

I wish we could focus on facts, because all of this is cheap political tactics to import a debate from the United States into Canada. It is not going to keep anyone safe. It is highly unfortunate, because the government had an opportunity to do something, to effect change, and it failed. All the government wants to do is impose an ideological agenda on a country that already has some of the tightest firearms laws in the world. Our statistics show that our legal firearms owners are not the source of this violence. Why would we then not focus on those who are perpetrating these crimes?

Someone who has obtained a handgun illegally is not, by definition or by virtue, going subscribe to the penalties in Bill C-71. It just affects law-abiding firearms owners, and those are not the people we need to focus on, based on the statistics we have.

● (1545)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been listening with great interest to the Liberals and Conservatives, who are both arguing past each other. The Liberals are saying they brought in a bill to stop gang violence. The Conservatives are saying that the only problem is with gang violence and illegal guns. However, the issue of licensing is incredibly important.

I represent a rural area and I am a registered gun owner myself. Deaths by suicide of rural men from gun violence is an enormous issue, and we have not been speaking about that. We have been chasing after these tropes of whether or not this legislation will or will not stop the import of illegal handguns. However, we need to talk about the importance of properly vetting and ensuring that legal gun owners are able to have guns without issues of PTSD, without issues of domestic violence, and without the threat of growing suicide numbers.

I would ask my hon. colleague what she feels about the need for proper vetting so we can ensure public safety for gun owners and their families.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, I will enlighten my colleague. When I went through the established vetting process for becoming a law-abiding firearms owner, my conjugal history was reviewed, my partnership history was reviewed, my mental health status was reviewed, and my employment history was reviewed. I had a detailed reference check. These are all provisions that already exist within Canada's licensing system. My colleague stood up and presented it like somehow that did not exist when it does.

Where this bill could have gone and it sadly is not going to is to look at ways in which the RCMP could better enforce the laws that are already on the books, perhaps with stricter penalties, if the data shows we need them.

Law-abiding firearms owners are the first ones to say they will play by the rules. The reality is that all of the comments that were brought up here are not based on facts or statistics. I could probably stand up here and debunk any one of the tropes that my colleague is trying to bring up in saying that the laws we have do not work.

The reality is that if we want to stop firearm violence, we have to stop the importation of illegal handguns.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think we all believe in effective public safety and the fair treatment of law-abiding firearms owners. However, we have seen an increase in the number of homicides. Since 2016, there were 223 firearms-related homicides in Canada, 44 more than the year before. That represents a 23% increase.

Bill C-71 is just enhancing background checks for those looking to get or renew a firearm licence. It will require sellers of firearms to verify if the purchaser is allowed to possess a firearm. It will require firearms vendors to keep records of sales. It places greater controls on the transportation of restricted and prohibited firearms. I do not see anything wrong with that, especially for ridings like Winnipeg Centre, which has seen an increase in violence and deals with this day in and day out.

Although we can try to put more people in prison for longer, maybe we should try to keep the guns out of the hands of people who should not have them in the first place by ensuring there are adequate background checks.

● (1550)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, we should try and keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them in the first place, and those are the people who have obtained them illegally.

I will again reiterate for my colleague that statistics show that a law-abiding firearms owner in Canada is three times less likely than a member of the general population to commit firearms-related violence.

My colleague used some very selective statistics. He talked about the increase in firearms-related violence from 2013. However, 2013 was a statistically low year. If we go back to 2009, it was 28.6%. In 2010 it was 23.%. In 2011 it was 21.9%. The curve goes around. What the Liberals have done is cut off the bottom part of that graph. They have done that because they want to have a symbolic gesture that imports American politics.

If my colleague actually had any interest in protecting the people in his riding from violence, he would be looking at ways to get illegally sourced weapons out of the hands of gang criminals. He has not done that. He has stood here and repeated false statistics out of context, and refused to acknowledge the fact that firearms-related violence comes from illegally sourced firearms.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North. I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-71 at third reading.

As we know, the recent increases in crimes committed with a firearm, gang activity, and homicides in our communities and cities require our urgent attention. A review of our firearms laws in Canada is long overdue, and Bill C-71 contains practical and balanced reforms that will help us achieve that.

We began by proposing mandatory criminal background checks as well as stricter controls for transporting restricted or prohibited firearms.

We began by proposing to remove the Governor in Council's authority to downgrade the classification of a firearm contrary to what is provided in the definition under the Criminal Code, thereby reclassifying some firearms in the prohibited weapons category, and then by limiting their authorized transfer through grandfathering.

We began by restoring a consistent approach to classification and by creating a bill that will help combat the problem of unauthorized access to firearms.

All of these reforms are about putting public safety first, and about making this bill enforceable and reasonable for responsible gun owners. These reforms are not about restoring the federal long gun registry. The committee agreed to add a provision that clarifies this exact point. The reforms also do not add any unreasonable measures for gun owners and retailers.

Hon. members in the House are calling on the federal government to look at how banned weapons get into the hands of organized crime, and this is exactly what the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction is responsible for. That is his job.

These reforms will stop guns from getting into the wrong hands and will help keep our communities safe. The bill we are debating today has been strengthened and improved by the comments and recommendations of my colleagues in the House, as well as the testimony of the many experts we heard in committee.

I would like to talk about how each party contributed to designing a bill that is able to do more.

As an aside, I want to mention that my brother is a gun enthusiast. He has his licence, and we talk about this topic every time we go for dinner at our mother's house.

First, the parties proposed enhancing background checks of firearms licence applicants, and the Liberal Party and Green Party amendments to that effect were adopted in committee with the agreement of the Conservative Party and NDP members. These amendments mean that from now on, specific additional checks will be done over the lifetime of a firearms licence applicant.

All parties agreed that if an applicant has a history of threatening behaviour or poses a risk of causing harm to himself or others, these factors must absolutely be taken into consideration in evaluating the application.

We now have a bill that expressly states, in no uncertain terms, that an individual's threatening behaviour must be taken into account in determining that individual's eligibility for a licence. What is more, the amendments that all parties agreed to contributed to expressly take into account whether the individual was or was not subject to a previous order prohibiting the possession of firearms in connection with violence against an intimate partner or former intimate partner. The bill now clearly indicates that threats of violence and threatening behaviour can include those communicated on the Internet or any other digital network.

This amendment responds to a serious and growing problem. Online harassment and hate, including threats of violence, have unfortunately become all too common in 2018. This is a disturbing trend that disproportionately affects women, racialized persons and LGBTQ people, and it gives way to racism, sexism, and intolerance in our daily lives.

● (1555)

According to Statistics Canada, one in six Internet users reported seeing content that promotes hate or violence, and 7% of these people have experienced it. Enforcement has focused on how to address this problem. Canadians from all walks of life are concerned about violent threats at a time when our lives depend on the use of the Internet.

With this amendment we can assure Canadians that the assessment of eligibility for a firearms licence will take into consideration threatening behaviour. This represents a reasonable and modern approach that will prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands.

I will cite some other amendments, moved by the different parties, that were adopted.

The Conservative amendment to section 1 would specify that the government will not reintroduce the federal long-gun registry. There is nothing in the bill to that effect and therefore that is quite fair.

The NDP's amendment makes a practical precision to the rules on transferring non-restricted firearms. The law will state that a reference number confirming the validity of the licence may apply to one transaction including the transfer of one or more unrestricted firearms. Clause 5 already sets out the conditions for transferring a non-restricted firearm, and it already includes the conditions for transferring more than one non-restricted firearm. However, the amended bill clarifies that if the licence and reference number are valid, people are free to transfer ownership of more than one non-restricted firearm.

I thank all parties for their work on this bill. It will be an improvement.

Once the bill is passed, if people plan to sell or give a non-restricted firearm, they will have to make sure that the person receiving it has a valid licence. They will also have to confirm with the RCMP's Canadian firearms program that the licence is valid, which will take just a few minutes.

Under the new law, the authorities who decide whether to issue a permit will also have to take into account an individual's entire record of certain types of criminal activities and violent behaviours, not just those of the previous five years.

It is already a best practice to include certain pieces of information in non-restricted firearm records, and we will support that practice by making it a legal obligation. Records will have to include the licence verification reference number issued by the registrar of firearms. They must also include the transferee's licence number and the date. Records will include information about the firearm being transferred, such as the serial number, date of manufacture, model and type. Firearms vendors must keep these records for at least 20 years. To be clear, businesses, not the government, will keep these records. It is already common practice for businesses to have these records and keep this kind of inventory. This bill will simply make that practice mandatory.

This new measure will guarantee that firearms are sold only to people with a valid licence, which will help save time and resources when it comes to enforcing the law. What is more, it will better support criminal investigations by providing the police with a tool that will make it easier to track non-restricted firearms that were used to commit a crime and to identify suspects of firearms offences. That will facilitate investigations and provide evidence that could help secure a conviction.

We are making these proposals with due consideration for privacy. Law enforcement agencies will not have any special powers in this regard. They will have to continue to operate under existing laws. All of this is supported by a consistent approach to firearms classification and safe and legal transportation requirements.

These proposals are effective measures that will enhance public safety and yet will still be fair and manageable for firearms owners and merchants.

● (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during this debate, I have heard simple slogans from the Conservative Party time and time again.

This law cannot be taken in isolation. Keeping guns out of the hands of criminals is very important, but how do we actually prevent people from becoming criminals?

We have instituted gang programs. We have instituted education programs. We have provided more monies for families, for instance, through the Canada child benefit program, to help people not only in the inner city but also in the suburbs, to help our children. We have put in place housing programs. We are giving people tools to make good choices in their lives. I do not believe anyone wants to end up one day becoming a criminal and destroying the lives of their fellow citizens.

Could the hon. member for Edmonton Centre tell us if this law should be taken in isolation or should it be taken as part of a whole-of-government approach, looking at a plethora of programs and a plethora of laws that we are putting in place in order to improve the lives of Canadians and actually make Canadians safer?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. Indeed, this is part of a whole-of-government approach in protecting Canadians and reinforcing security for our communities.

It is important to note that we respect and admire the process that law-abiding gun owners go through to receive their permits. Bill C-71 is attempting to strengthen background checks and licence verification. People in Alberta have to get their licences renewed every five years to drive a car. It is important to know that people have valid permits in order to use their legally registered firearms. We have to have more sensible rules around the transportation of restricted and prohibited firearms and a consistent approach to classification.

Cabinet should not be able to decide the technical matters of whether a weapon is prohibited, restricted or permitted. That is up to technical gun experts, and that is exactly what Bill C-71 is allowing this government to do to keep Canadians safer.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, the correspondence that I am getting in Nanaimo—Ladysmith about Bill C-71 and the amendments to the gun safety process that the Liberal government is proposing are running kind of fifty-fifty. I am very aware that many responsible gun owners, hunters and gun clubs in my riding are very concerned about the design of this. They see the steps as mostly being unnecessary. They are already comporting themselves well and already subject to a lot of rules. In the spirit of co-operation, I will provide one example and hope that the government representative can give me some detail. I am hoping you can reassure this constituent of mine.

Andrew from Nanaimo said, "The background checks for the possession and acquisition licence are already currently legislated to go back five years. However, at the discretion of the chief firearms officer, they can go back as far as they feel necessary already. On top of this, all PAL holders are run through the Canadian police information centre daily to check to for any infractions which may be of concern. If C-71 passes and these mandatory lifetime background checks are required every time a licence is renewed rather than just on a new application, this will simply be a waste of RCMP resources. Instead of lifetime, why not just set the time frame for new applicant background checks to be at the CFO's discretion? They will probably go as far back as when the applicant turned 18 anyway".

Through you, can you let me know if that is a consideration as a way to minimize the impact on—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address the questions to the Chair. I know she said "through you", but then earlier in her speech she also directed the information directly to the member. If members do not use the word "you", it will be better.

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

● (1605)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, the committee talked about and looked at this question. I believe it was a motion accepted by all parties, of not allowing background checks that would span more than five years to be optional. We are seeing a rise not just in violent crime but in Internet hate and violence in online communities. The idea was that if there are going to be licences and we have to make sure they are valid, the ability to check a person's history throughout the course of his or her life needs to be required. It should no longer be optional and needs to be required. The committee debated it and found it was in the interest of the safety of Canadians. That is why it is in Bill C-71.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I were to try to summarize this piece of legislation in three words, the three words that would come to my mind would be "enhancing public safety". That is the essence of what this bill is all about. Having said that, I would like to make a statement that I would think is very obvious and that the Conservative Party members might want to listen in on.

In the last federal election the Liberal Party made a commitment to do just that, those three simple but very important words. Bill C-71 is a fulfillment of a commitment that this Prime Minister and this caucus made to the electorate back in 2015. No one should be surprised by the legislation. In fact, I would have thought people would have been disappointed if we did not bring in the legislation. I know many of my constituents and Canadians in all regions of this country would be disappointed in the government had we not brought forward legislation of this nature because we had made a commitment to do so.

This piece of legislation reflects where the Conservative Party is coming from. Number one, it demonstrates that the Conservative Party really and truly is out of touch with what Canadians think and believe. I would encourage people to read what the minister responsible, the member for Regina—Wascana, read into the record. Very clearly, he indicated the details of what this bill would do. I suspect that if the Conservatives were to canvass Canadians in a public forum and possibly have a public meeting, they would find overwhelming support for what the member for Regina—Wascana explained to this House earlier today.

The changes that are being made, a few of which I will highlight very shortly, are fairly straightforward, but the Conservatives have this Stephen Harper mentality. They really have not forgotten Stephen Harper. One of my colleagues calls it Harperite disease, or something of that nature. The member across the way puts two thumbs up for Harper. I mention his name and they applaud. They do not quite understand that going the Harper way is not what Canadians want to see of the official opposition. We often kid around that the Conservatives' current leader is just Harper but with a smile. We say that kind of tongue in cheek, but in reality, in many issues it is true. There really is not very much difference between the current leader and Stephen Harper, and this is a good example of it. We listen to the propaganda and the spin that are coming from the opposition today, and we get a good appreciation as to why Canadians would believe there is no difference between the Harper years previously and the Conservative Party today under this new leader. I want to be parliamentary here. That spin is incredibly misleading.

Listening to the speakers, some of them are more candid than others. Some will say this is all about a long-gun registry. It is amazing. It is just not true. The Prime Minister has said that. The ministers have said that. Members on this side have said that. In fact, while this bill was in committee, a Conservative member moved an amendment to make sure it was very clear, in the legislation where it says in no way is it associated with a long-gun registry. That motion actually passed. We would think that would stop them from wanting to give misinformation, but the misinformation continues. Like Stephen Harper, the Conservatives went to every region of the country talking about how bad the long-gun registry was. I do not believe it was good. That is why the Liberals voted that way—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1610)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The microphone has been shut off. All the members have been here for quite some time, for the most part. There are only a few who have been fairly recent. I would just say that everybody knows what the rules of the House are, and it is not about shouting at each other while one person is talking. I know it is a very controversial bill, from what I can tell based on the discussion, or should I say very passionate. I would just say that if people want to ask questions or make comments, that they wait their turn to be able to do that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is really not that controversial a bill if one reads the content, but if we take into consideration the Harper Conservative rhetoric in opposition on it, then I can understand why many people who are listening to the debate would think that it is controversial. It really is not controversial. What is it doing?

If we ask Canadians if there is anything wrong with having background checks, there is nothing is wrong with that. All we are doing is allowing the chief financial officer to extend it beyond five years. What is wrong with that? One of the members across the way said it already does that. The bill would obligate it as opposed to making it optional. That is the point.

The Conservatives will say off the record or in the hallways that if it gets down to the core of what the legislation actually does, maybe there is nothing wrong with that, but they do not want to be thrown off the Harper Conservative spin, which means they have to oppose Bill C-71 and make it out to be something it is not. The content is good. It is solid. It is part of an election platform that means we will have better, safer communities that we all represent. There is nothing wrong with extending background checks.

It would require sellers to verify that purchasers are allowed to possess a firearm. What is wrong with that? Even in the U.S. they do that, but not the Harper Conservatives. They feel compelled to oppose that.

It is amazing when Conservatives talk about the registry. Back in the days of Brian Mulroney, retailers were compelled to register the firearms they sold. Brian Mulroney recognized that as a positive thing and so does this legislation. It happens in the U.S. Organizations like the NRA, an organization that many of the Conservatives across the way would salute, provide registries for retailers to ensure it is being done in a proper way. Again, that is what the legislation is doing. Every measure within this legislation makes sense and would be supported by a vast majority of Canadians. Only the Conservative Party seems to be at complete odds with this legislation.

I would welcome and invite a member from the Conservative Party to come to Winnipeg North and have a breakfast or lunch discussion on the issue. I look at the legislation and I am convinced that if members put the Harper Conservative spin aside and were concerned about public safety and wanted to add value to that issue, one of the things they could do is reverse their position, stop the rhetoric and support this legislation. If they did that, I believe that at the end of the day even their own constituents would appreciate the fact that this is good legislation and that they made a positive decision.

The Conservative Party stands alone inside this chamber. The Green Party, the Bloc, the New Democrats, Liberals and Canadians are all onside. The only ones who seem to be offside are the Conservative opposition members. I would suggest they skip the rhetoric, look at the substance, get on board and vote yes for this legislation.

● (1615)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague said that the bill could be summarized in three words: enhancing public safety. I spent quite a bit of my summer talking to different people in my riding, many of them hunters, sport shooters and farmers, and to a person, they are concerned that the bill does absolutely zero in terms of enhancing public safety. It adds an administrative burden to their lives and it potentially criminalizes law-abiding citizens.

Here we have Bill C-71, which my colleague says could be summarized in three words, enhancing public safety. At the same time, we have Bill C-75, which proposes to reduce sentences for some very violent acts in this country.

How can my colleague stand and look anyone in the eye and say honestly that Bill C-71 is summarized by enhancing public safety?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, very easily, because it does just that. We are talking about Bill C-71. If one were to attend a Conservative convention in Alberta and go over this legislation, which I would be more than happy to attend with an invitation from my colleague, I suspect even Conservatives would support this legislation. I really believe that.

In Winnipeg North, we have Conservatives. Unfortunately, a few too many, but we have Conservatives, and I meet with them too. I do not believe the member, who is trying to give an impression, I would suggest a false impression, that Canadians would not support this kind of legislation. I know it because I have been working and dealing with issues of this nature for many years, both in opposition and in government. This is the type of legislation that can make a positive difference, and Canadians do support it.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, for the people of my region, there are a couple of questions that are very important, and one is that there are concerns about the transportation requirements. Legitimate gun owners want to know that they would be able to go to events such as gun shows legally, and there are a lot of questions and uncertainty on the transportation requirements.

The second issue is on background checks. I believe we have to extend background checks, because we are seeing a large number of suicides and domestic deaths from guns. The question comes on the renewal period. For someone who has been a long-time gun owner, I have done the renewal checks, and I think they are pretty good. However, when there is family crisis, like people losing their jobs, without being too intrusive but for community protection, how do we ensure proper checks? To me, that is a big issue. Domestic gun violence by legitimate gun owners is a serious issue. We have to find a find a way to do this in a manner that is not over-policing legitimate gun owners but that is also ensuring public safety.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the issue of background checks and how we do it credibly so we can reduce the number of self-harm deaths, and how we have transportation requirements which are not unfairly impinging on people's work and use of guns.

● (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, with regard to transportation, one of the nice things we have seen within this legislation, and something the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness talked about, is that the primary transportation of these types of firearms is to and from a qualified shooting range. I believe it is 95%, or it might be just over 90%. In that sort of a situation, one would not be obligated to get a travelling permit every time. There has been special consideration given to that.

I do not want to claim to know all the details, but I can say that whether through the Internet or other means, one can get very good details. We have many fine responsible firearm owners, and they understand and appreciate that these are not actions that are going to hurt them. This is about public safety.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Veterans Affairs; and the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to stand in this place and speak, not necessarily just on this bill, but on this issue. I have been speaking on this issue in the House it seems for 25 years, but in reality it is 18 years, because that is when I came to the House. Today it is Bill C-71, which has been dubbed the firearm owners harassment act, and most of my constituents believe that is what Bill C-71 is.

Last spring, I wrote a biweekly column for the papers in my constituency. In that newspaper column, the reference was Groundhog Day, because when Bill C-71 was introduced, it was much like Bill Murray in the movie *Groundhog Day* reliving a very memorable and disturbing day. For me, that day happened back on February 14, 1995. Over and over, we have had reference to that day here in the House of Commons. It was the day that ultimately led to my seeking election for this place in 2000. It was the day that Bill C-68 was introduced by former Liberal justice minister Allan Rock. I will say that there is still a distrust among law-abiding gun owners in this country of the Liberal Party of Canada.

I will paint this picture a little clearer. We are debating Bill C-71, but today in the Globe and Mail, the story is that one of our ministers is going to begin consultations on banning firearms, banning handguns, across Canada. Therefore, although we debate Bill C-71, which has bad proposed legislation in it, the background is that there is more going on with the Liberal government. One of my colleagues from Lethbridge earlier this week delivered a petition to Parliament with 86,000 signatures from law-abiding gun owners in this country. There are over 10,000 from Quebec and tens of thousands from other provinces across this country. There is very little trust in the Liberal government when it comes to this issue, because we have seen it in the past.

While the grip that the Liberal government is trying to put on law-abiding firearm owners this time is not as tight as the one that Mr. Rock tried in the mid-1990s, we believe that any movement on this bill that takes away the rights of law-abiding gun owners is not right, fair, or in the best interest of Canadians.

On the day that the public safety minister introduced Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, many were immediately ready to jump to compare it to the infamous predecessor. I thought at that time that I would reserve judgment. That reservation lasted about 20 minutes, as it did not take long, after reading through the legislation, to see what the Liberal government was trying to do. It does not bring it back to the extent of the ineffective long-gun registry, but it is a very good step toward that.

In the mid-1990s, Bill C-68 created the billion-dollar gun registry and made criminals out of law-abiding firearm owners such as farmers and duck hunters. However, it did not solve the problem. Many Canadians, particularly anglers, hunters and farmers, which is the majority of my riding, who had been in possession of their firearms for a long time, were made to retroactively, and at a great cost both financially and emotionally, ensure that the make, model, serial number, calibre and barrel length of their firearm was properly recorded and placed on the firearm registry. Failure to do so could turn them into an immediate criminal. That is the kind of intent that the Liberal government has in regard to legal firearm owners, law-abiding citizens.

● (1625)

Soon after forming government in 2006, Stephen Harper and our Conservative caucus immediately moved to eliminate the long-gun registry and to restore the respect that law-abiding firearm owners had been denied since former Liberal justice minister Allan Rock tabled Bill C-68. Unfortunately, once again, that respect is being stripped away, and firearm owners will be made to feel like criminals under the reference number provision outlined in Bill C-71.

Section 5 of the Firearms Act is being amended to include the requirement for anyone transferring a long gun to obtain a reference number from the firearm registry. Before any firearm can be sold or given away, the buyer has to show a licence, and the seller, whether a retailer or private citizen, has to confirm it is valid with the registrar. The problem with this, and I mentioned it in the House before, is that all throughout constituencies in western Canada and indeed Canada —Ontario is similar and possibly Quebec, but I am not certain— there are gun shows going on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, where thousands of collectors, farmers, and law-abiding firearm owners are buying that next rifle for hunting or protecting their livestock. That is going to cause massive problems with the industry gun shows, like gun shows in Concort, Hanna, Castor and Torrington, and the list goes on throughout my constituency.

Currently, vendors are trusted to do a requisite licence check without confirmation. The registrar will issue the reference number only if satisfied that the person buying or receiving the firearm holds or is able to hold an eligible licence.

I see that my time is up. I just want to underscore that this is bad legislation. I encourage the Liberals to back off on Bill C-71.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 4:29 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the question on the motion is deemed to have been put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Monday, September 24, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so we could begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do I have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Consequently, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1630)

[*English*]

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AMBASSADOR

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.) moved:

That the House: (a) recognize that Canada has a rich tradition of peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding; (b) recognize that Canada is a world leader in the promotion of human rights and peace, having crafted the wording of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, envisioned the creation of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, championed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (the "Ottawa Treaty") and initiated and led on the Responsibility to Protect doctrine; (c) recognize that the government drafted Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which calls on member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to contribute to the further development of peaceful international relations, including by seeking to eliminate conflict and promoting conditions of stability and well-being; (d) recognize that harmful practices and social norms, including among women, that uphold gender hierarchies and other intersecting forms of marginalization and exclusion or condone violence are often exacerbated during conflict and that women and men must be equally committed to changing attitudes, behaviours, and roles to support gender equality; (e) acknowledge that overcoming insecurity and achieving sustainable peace are daily concerns for these communities and that women and girls suffer disproportionately in these conflict settings but remain almost entirely excluded from the processes that build peace; (f) recall resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, notably Resolution 1325 (2000), which reaffirm the important and consequential role in women's engagement in preventing and resolving conflicts, in peace operations, in humanitarian response, in post-conflict reconstruction, and in counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism; (g) acknowledge Canada's own challenges, including gender-based violence and underlying gender inequality and work to develop a framework to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda domestically; and (h) reaffirm Canada's commitment to build on our recognized accomplishments and enhance our leadership role in advancing the cause of peace domestically and throughout the world by calling on the government to develop a plan to appoint a Women, Peace and Security Ambassador to: (i) promote research and studies relating to root causes of and preconditions leading to violent conflict and to conflict resolution and prevention, for respect for women's and girls' human rights and to conditions conducive to peace, (ii) support the implementation of education, training and counselling in non-violent conflict resolution, (iii) initiate, recommend, coordinate, implement, and promote national policies, projects and programs relating to the reduction and prevention of conflict and empowerment of women and girls and the development and maintenance of conditions conducive to peace, (iv) encourage the development and implementation of gender and peace-based initiatives by governmental and non-governmental entities including engaging with stakeholders, educational institutions and civil society, (v) lead the implementation of the Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, (vi) promote gender equality and the integration of gender perspectives into peacebuilding and peacekeeping, (vii) review and assess the Departments' yearly Action Plan reporting.

He said: Madam Speaker, this past summer I hosted a series of round tables on women, peace and security from coast to coast, from Vancouver to Halifax. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the participants, who represented over 100 Canadian NGOs, not just for their participation and their good counsel, but also to thank them for the years, decades, and in some cases a lifetime of work and commitment on issues of gender equality, human rights, democratic rights, international development and peace.

In the House we often disagree on matters, but there is one thing on which all of us would agree and that is that we are blessed to live in the best country on the planet. We do not just say that because we are exuberantly proud Canadians; it is actually substantiated by the facts. For instance, the World Forum last year in its annual rankings of the most livable countries in the world based on multiple matrices listed Canada and Switzerland as the two most livable countries in the world. We are a people blessed. However, when we give thanks for those blessings, we should also pause and reflect. Yes, we are the most livable country in the world, but it certainly does not mean that we are perfect. It definitely does not mean that we cannot do better. Let me provide some context.

There is probably no more beautiful sight in our country than when we look through the window of a maternity ward and see all the newborns. Think of the little girls and project out to the point in time when they become young women and they enter the workforce. If the status quo does not change, if it is maintained, what will they encounter? They will be paid 75% of what those little boys will be paid. How is that possible in our Canada? How is that just? That seems to say that we value women at 75% of what we value men.

It is not just as a society how we value women; it is also how we treat women. Once again, when we look at international studies, we find that Canada is ranked as the most peaceful country on the planet. It looks at state violence, interpersonal violence, and once again uses various matrices. However, when we dive into the Canadian figures, we find in the under 30 age bracket there is a very large portion of those violent acts. Most people would assume that it is young men committing acts of violence against other young men, but in fact, that assumption is incorrect. Young Canadian women are 1.9 times more likely to be the victims of violence than young Canadian men.

What about the sanctuary of home and hearth? Seventy per cent of the victims of domestic violence in Canada are women and girls. Eighty per cent of the victims of partner homicide are women. If we really want to dive into some darker statistics, all we have to do is look at the statistics in our indigenous communities.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Young indigenous women in Canada are five times more likely to be the victims of violence than young men. Yes, we are lucky enough to live in one of the best countries in the world, Canada, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

That is why, in November 2017, we launched our national action plan on women, peace, and security. We are showing leadership on this on the world stage. In February, we committed to providing $2 billion for our feminist international development policy. In June, at the G7 summit in Charlevoix, together with our G7 partners we announced historic funding of $3.8 billion for the education of women and girls in crisis and conflict situations.

● (1640)

[*English*]

I have had the opportunity over the years to travel into war zones and civil war zones. I have seen how hatreds are nurtured and are stirred up. I have seen how conflict and violence are planned out and executed, and I have seen the consequences. Humanity has an incredible capacity for violence, destruction and bloodshed. However, it is not, in fact, humanity, and I will say something that is perhaps politically difficult but correct: It is mankind. Mankind has an incredible capacity for violence, destruction and bloodshed. When I have travelled into war zones or postwar zones, I have seen the men—it is men—who commit the horrors, and often it is women and children who bear the brunt of the suffering.

In the summer of 2005, just off the peak of the genocide in Darfur, I travelled into Darfur to the IDP camp, the internally displaced persons camp, of El Fasher. I listened to the horrific stories of women who had survived Janjaweed attacks on their villages. Most often these villages were devoid of men. Older women and children were massacred. Younger women and girls were rounded up and their testimonies were horrific and gut-wrenching.

[*Translation*]

When I left El Fasher, I noticed outside the perimeter of the camp what appeared to be villas behind the walls. I asked the driver what those structures might be. At first he was reluctant to tell me, but I did not stop asking questions. Finally, he said that they were harems that belonged to peacekeepers who selected the most beautiful of the young women and girls in the displaced persons camps.

[*English*]

That was just over a decade ago. However, crimes against humanity and genocides are not just something that we read about in history books and pledge "never again" during solemn commemorations on Parliament Hill. It has happened on our watch.

In 2016, at the time that I chaired the citizenship and immigration committee, the committee undertook an extraordinary summer hearing in order to hear from the survivors of the Yazidi genocide, including Nadia Murad. It was the first time that a warning to the viewing public was necessary on CPAC due to the nature of the testimony that we were about to hear.

Later that evening, I spent some time with Nadia in my office. We became friends. I am so grateful and thankful that with her engagements with members of Parliament we were able to, in a non-partisan, collective way, lay the political tracks to acknowledge this genocide in this House and to bring 1,200 Yazidi survivors to Canada. How encouraging it was that on such a fundamentally critical issue of humanity we were able to rise above our conditioned partisanship in this place and do what was right for the Yazidis and Yazidi women.

When we had those hearings, I also thought that we should have hearings into the developing situation in Myanmar and Rohingya people. Crimes against humanity and genocide are predictable. These hearings took place in the summer of 2016. We are now at the end of the summer of 2018. Just today the House unanimously voted to call what happened a crime against humanity and genocide.

What happened between that committee hearing in 2016 and 2018? Hundreds of thousands, almost a million, Rohingya are in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Thousands of young Rohingya women have no families, because they have been massacred, have no villages to return to because they have been razed, and have no possessions other than one: babies, the progeny of ethnic cleansing and mass rapes.

Clearly, crimes against humanity and genocide, these horrors, continue in our world and on our watch. It is not something that happened in the past. The question then becomes, "What will we do?"

Canada has an incredible legacy of bringing peace to the world. We have our Pearsonian legacy of peacekeeping. Prime minister Brian Mulroney took the lead in the Commonwealth on the fight against apartheid. The treaty on the prohibition of land mines is called the Ottawa Treaty due to the hard work of Canadians and the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy.

I was honoured to be in Canada's delegation at the 2005 U.N. World Summit when former prime minister Paul Martin laid out the concept of R2P, the responsibility to protect. Canada has shown, over and over, that we have the capacity to think outside the political box and to come up with innovative ways to find peace.

Our current Minister of Foreign Affairs announced the Elsie initiative, which will increase the participation of women in peace operations. This weekend, she will co-host, with the EU foreign minister, a global gathering of female foreign ministers. What an opportunity to demonstrate Canadian leadership.

Historically, Canada has and continues to demonstrate the political determination to make a difference internationally. I believe it is time for Canada to step forward once again, and to lead.

We can be at the forefront in building institutions, a department of peace, which will foster a culture of peace domestically and internationally. Let us begin by passing Motion No. 163 and create the institution of an ambassador for women, peace and security, and finally give substance to our commitment to UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

● (1645)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleague what the proposed ambassador will do that would be different from the peace and stabilization operations program director general Ms. Larisa Galadza, who has 63 staff within her department, who has $450 million worth of program expenses that are directly, and already stated by the government, used to execute the women, peace and security agenda.

How will the ambassador function within the operating structure that is outlined in five pages of detail in the document entitled, "Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace—Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022—For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security"?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, we have people in various places in the House and government departments who do their work because they feel passionately and strongly about these issues. I would like to thank Ms. Galadza and her team for all of their tremendous work. I am glad she has been singled out because she has done tremendous work in laying the foundations of something that has the capacity to be a game changer.

Our committee on foreign affairs did a study two years ago that proposed a number of resolutions, and as part of that package, one of the final resolutions was for every government department to have a person engaged with this file on women, peace and security.

An ambassador would have an opportunity to bring cohesion and to do this in a way that is not just reactive, looking at what happened over the past year, but works proactively.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to say that the NDP supports this motion in principle. However, this motion that seeks to appoint a women, peace and security ambassador does not include a budget.

The motion seeks to promote research and studies relating to root causes of violent conflict, support the implementation of education, training and counselling in non-violent conflict resolution, and work on launching national projects and programs, among other things.

How could an ambassador accomplish all that if no financial framework is added to the budget? For now, the motion does not mention anything about funding.

Can the hon. member explain to me what type of funding might be associated with this motion and how much? Can he tell me whether the government is considering proceeding with this in order to move beyond good intentions?

[*English*]

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, within a motion it is not the prerogative of the House to set a budget for the executive branch of government. This is where the great debates of the day can take place. It is up to the legislature to pass the laws, but when it comes to budgetary questions, procedurally they are not allowed in the body of a motion.

That said, I certainly hope that with the support of all colleagues from all parties in the House, we would see a robust and ambitious response by the government to this motion.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, as one of the only Liberals who had the courage to stand and vote in support of a Conservative motion to declare that genocide was being perpetrated against the Yazidi people, I have decided to give my Liberal colleague from Etobicoke Centre's motion careful attention and scrutiny.

The motion before us today asks Parliament to address the women, peace and security agenda. For those wondering what that is, a while ago the United Nations passed resolutions to address women's challenges in conflict situations and women's potential to influence global peace and security.

However, in the motion in front of us, after we dig through the long text of the motion, I believe my Liberal colleague is trying to do two things. First, as set out in section (g) of the motion, he seeks to "work to develop a framework to implement the women, peace and security agenda domestically". He seeks to do this in section (h) of the motion, by appointing a women, peace and security ambassador.

In evaluating my colleague's motion today, I undertook the following research. Does the Government of Canada have a plan to address the women, peace and security agenda? If yes, what is that plan? If yes, is there someone already in charge of implementing the plan? It turns out that for years, across different governments, we have tabled something called "Canada's National Action Plan" for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. Therefore, while we could debate its quality, we already have a plan. The government tabled its version of the document for the period of 2017 through 2022 last year.

The plan outlines a framework to implement the women, peace and security agenda domestically. Specifically, pages 8 through 17 of the plan outline what the government has already done, what my colleague is asking the government to do in section (g) of the motion. As such, section (g) is redundant, as the government's plan will stand without specific instructions from the House, which my colleague has failed to clarify in this section of his motion.

To emphasize this point, I would like to draw my colleague's attention to page 10 of the document, to the section entitled "Objectives for the Action Plan", which outlines the government's stated objectives to "implement the women, peace and security agenda domestically." Again, section (g) of the motion is redundant.

I would like to now discuss section (h) of the motion, which asks the government to appoint an ambassador to implement this action plan. If there is already a plan, logic would dictate that there would be someone in charge of implementing said plan. Lo and behold, I found out that there is.

Under the "Action Plan Partners" section, on page 11 of the document that I previously referenced, the government outlines the departments that would act as lead partners on this initiative. The next two pages go on to list the operating objectives of these departments with regard to implementing the women, peace and security agenda. On page 14, it specifically outlines which ministers are accountable for delivering on the implementation plan and how they would do so.

It gets even more specific on page 14. It states that the peace and stabilization operations program, or PSOPs division of Global Affairs Canada, via the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is "responsible for Canada's implementation of the international WPS agenda and for ensuring that implementation across government is aligned with the government's foreign policy priorities. Global Affairs Canada, through PSOPs, coordinates the whole-of-government Action Plan efforts."

Page 15 goes even further. It outlines the structure of the governing advisory board, which states which bureaucrats who are already on staff are responsible for tabling and co-ordinating progress reports in this regard. Going even further, page 15 goes on to state that the director general of the peace and stabilization operation program will also be "Canada's National Focal Point globally for WPS implementation." The director general of the peace and stabilization operations program, Ms. Larisa Galadza, has 63 staff within her department, and she reports to the associate deputy minister of international security, who in turn reports to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, who in turn reports to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Clearly, there are already a lot of people directly in charge of implementing the women, peace and security agenda.

A quick search of Ms. Galadza's division shows that she also has staff at the deputy director salary level who have women, peace and security in their operational title. She also has over two dozen policy specialists in her department and many senior program operational officers. I am sure they are wonderful and very highly talented staff.

Further, in 2016, the government released an announcement that allocated nearly half a billion dollars to Ms. Galadza's department. One of the objectives of the funding, issued in a news release, was "PSOPs will also coordinate the government's implementation of Canada's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and actively promote the role of women and youth in conflict resolution."

● (1655)

The government is already spending millions of dollars on salaries and nearly half a billion dollars on programming. It has a robust organizational structure and operating plan that reports into our foreign affairs minister, a whole action plan to ostensibly deliver on what my colleague has outlined in section (h) of his motion. There is no mention of who the ambassador in section (h) of this motion would report to, how they would integrate into this already very complex and expensive operating structure, how much their expenses would be, what value they would add to achieving the framework objectives, what their travel costs would be, or how their existence would complicate the efforts of Ms. Galadza's department. I am sure she has great consternation trying to figure out how this person would ruin her life, potentially.

Further, I searched through departmental performance reports, committee testimony and civil society reports issued by the Women, Peace and Security Network, which is a group of non-governmental organizations in Canada that work together to deliver on the women, peace, and security goals. I did not find one recommendation that hiring an ambassador as outlined in section (h) of this motion would materially improve Canada's ability to implement the WPS goals, especially in the context of existing operating structures. From this we must conclude that hiring an ambassador would be a redundancy.

With so many Canadians in need, with their taxes going up and our deficits rising, we cannot afford to expand government without being able to explain to taxpayers why we are doing so. Given my colleague has presented nothing to suggest that hiring an ambassador would advance the WPS agenda more effectively than Ms. Galadza's department is already doing, I find it hard to make a case in this regard.

In fact, I suspect that, if the government is wed to spending even more taxpayer dollars on this issue, it would be more effective to allocate the same amount of money that would go toward hiring an ambassador, their staff and their travel costs to non-governmental organizations, for example, Nadia Murad's organization. Moreover, the tax dollars we would spend on hiring a redundant ambassador could also be used to do things to materially support women in need here in Canada. We cannot continue to support costly symbolic gestures, especially given that there are many Canadians who cannot make ends meet and want accountability from us in this place for how we spend their hard-earned money.

Again, I remember that my colleague stood with me when none of his Liberal colleagues did in declaring the Yazidi genocide here in this place. I would suggest, in the spirit of collegiality and in the spirit of being prudent with taxpayer dollars, that we study whether the existing structure to deliver on the WPS objectives is working before we add another layer of redundant bureaucracy to it, and study the objectives themselves before overlaying more operational costs to the achievement of said goals.

For example, I would like to see the following objectives added to Canada's WPS goals: ensure that Canadian citizens who join ISIS and commit sexual violence are prosecuted to the full extent of the law; support UN goodwill ambassador Nadia Murad's case at the International Criminal Court to prosecute perpetrators of sexual slavery; ensure that victims of sexualized violence are prioritized in Canada's refugee selection; recommend sanctions against countries that will not prosecute their soldiers who commit sexual violence during war; fight sex trafficking actively and report on the prevalence of international sex trafficking rings in Canada; report on Canada's progress in implementing the recommendations of the UN Secretary General relating to women, peace and security; and implement a mechanism for early-warning detection that war-related sexualized violence is likely to occur.

I appreciate my colleague's determination, but this is a motion with no substance and a lot of redundancy.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, that the motion be amended as follows: in paragraph (g), deleting the words "and work to develop a framework to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda domestically"; and in paragraph (h), deleting all the words after "throughout the world by" and replacing them with the following: "recommend that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs study the progress the government has made on achieving the objectives outlined in the document entitled 'Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022' for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution on women, peace and security, and the adequacy of the objectives and operating structure found within said document".

● (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: No.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

[*English*]

Resuming date, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, the security of women and the security of the state are deeply intertwined. A 2009 resolution of the Security Council stressed the particular impact that armed conflict has on women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as other vulnerable civilians, including persons with disabilities and older persons. The United Nations and international aid agencies say women are among the most heavily impacted victims of war. Tens of thousands suffer from sexual violence, rape and lack of access to life-saving health care.

Amnesty International says that women and girls are uniquely and disproportionately affected by armed conflict. Women bear the brunt of war and represent the vast majority of casualties resulting from war. Rape and sexual violence target women and girls and are routinely used not only to terrorize women but also as a strategic tool of war and instrument of genocide. Systemic rape is often used as a weapon of war in ethnic cleansing, and in addition to rape, girls and women are often subject to forced prostitution and trafficking during times of war, sometimes with the complicity of governments and military authorities.

In all countries, everywhere in the world, sexual violation of women erodes the fabric of society in ways that few weapons can. This is the moral challenge to our country and to our government. Some 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not yet considered a crime. In many countries, there is repression, the silencing of abuse, and the mistreatment and imprisonment of women and human rights defenders. Are we exporting weapons to these countries?

Former New Democrat leader Stephen Lewis, in a very powerful speech, said, "We're not supposed to be sending armaments to countries that have a 'persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens'. Saudi Arabia is the embodiment of the meaning of the word 'violations'." He went on to describe the irony of having a prime minister who unselfconsciously calls himself a feminist and yet is selling weapons to a regime "steeped in misogyny".

There is some good news, though. UN Women noted this year that "When women are included in peace processes there is a 20 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 2 years, and a 35 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years." That, again, is the link between women being the victims of war and the antidote to war, preventing it and keeping the peace. This is particularly through the women, peace and security agenda of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

I laud the role of civil society organizations around the world. They have worked very hard for this. Following this resolution passed in October 2010, the Security Council has adopted seven additional resolutions. Collectively, these resolutions include key issues. The first is participation, including strengthened women's representation, involvement and active participation in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, peace negotiations and post-conflict rebuilding; second is protection, support for preventing and responding to violence against women and sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflict; third is prevention, highlighting the importance of conflict prevention and reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding; and finally is relief and recovery, including support for women's equitable participation and gender mainstreaming in all post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery processes.

The UN motion in 2010 was ultimately acted on by the Conservative government. It delivered the Canadian national action plan on women, peace and security six years late and with little support. Therefore, we are now on another iteration.

Flowing from that, in 2016, my New Democrat colleague, the member of Parliament who represents Laurier—Sainte-Marie, at the foreign affairs committee of the House of Commons, initiated a study on women, peace and security, which concluded that, "greater and more consistent leadership" was needed from Canada, including greater resourcing and comprehensive coordination at the highest levels of government. It gave rise to the motion that we are debating in the House today, which New Democrats spawned and support.

● (1705)

In my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, I laud the work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. It has been holding the banner for peace and against war year after year. It is a very strong and committed peace movement in my community.

The Canadian Voice of Women for Peace urges the House in particular to:

> Increase funds that go directly to women's organizations involved in building peace. We know that these organizations are crucial in both ensuring peace at the grassroots level and in fostering leaders that are capable of participating in peace negotiations. However, they are underfunded and starved for resources. From the evidence available it appears that this has not been a priority of the Canadian government to date.
>
> One recommendation, consistent with United Nation's goals, is that 15% of all funding going to conflict affected countries have gender equality/women's empowerment goals as their principal purpose.

I thank the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

Because we want this motion and this movement, which is so built on the backs of so many, to succeed I am going to propose amendments in three areas, and will describe the rationale for them first before I move the motion.

First, while Canada has historically been recognized as a leader on human rights, the status has recently been slipping as the Liberals fail to follow through on their public rhetoric on human rights, women, peace and security.

Second, we want to acknowledge the importance of women's active participation in and contributions to peacekeeping and the peace-building process.

Third, the Liberals have provided no additional funding for its new commitments to women, peace and security and the proposal of an ambassador on women, peace and security. The national action plan on women, peace and security is nothing more than rhetoric without a dedicated line in the budget.

Therefore, I move the following: That the motion be amended by (a) replacing the words "Canada is a world leader" with the words "Canada has traditionally been a world leader"; (b) adding, after the words "countering violent extremism", the words "and acknowledge that when women participate in the peace processes the chances of having lasting peace significantly increases"; and (c) adding, after the words "Action Plan reporting",the words "and (i) encourage the government to allocate additional funding to support the new ambassador, their mandate and the full realization of Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security."

● (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly it is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3) no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

I therefore ask the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre if he consents to the proposed amendment.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to the first two points, I believe we would be able to find a common ground. However, the third point talks about budgets, and I believe this would not be allowed in a motion. Therefore, at this point in time, with tremendous sympathy for the amendments proposed, I will unfortunately have to say no.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Etobicoke Centre, for introducing this important motion to establish an ambassador for women, peace and security.

This is a very special topic for me as I have first-hand experience in this area. As a Canadian woman who has served as a civilian peacekeeper in Bosnia and Kosovo and alongside the peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and as a recipient of the Governor General's Peacekeeping Service Medal, I know first-hand the positive outcomes of having more women engaged in global peacekeeping.

I am a woman. I was a peacekeeper. I was not deployed. Like so many other civilian peacekeepers, I volunteered to go. I did it because I could not stand by and watch what was happening to women and children in those countries. In Bosnia and Kosovo, sexual violence against women was used as a weapon of war. I am very proud of all the Canadian women who have served as peacekeepers, military and civilian, in some of the most dangerous and difficult corners of the world.

I am equally proud of another woman, Justice Louise Arbour, who was instrumental in making sure that rape could be considered a war crime.

In the Congo, 48 women are raped every hour. I worked directly with those women. I saw their strength and their resilience, their determination to make a better world for their daughters and sons. It is for that reason that I am so proud to be part of a government that has done so much on a feminist foreign policy and on the national action plan on women, peace and security.

Gone are the days when warlords can get together behind closed doors, divide up the spoils of war and call it a peace agreement. We know that peace agreements are more durable, in fact two-thirds less likely to fail, when women are at the table and involved in the implementation of those agreements.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

In today's armed conflicts, civilians are the primary targets. Rape is used as an instrument of war, and violent extremism has added an ideological spin that attracts people from far and wide. Women and girls are often targeted and subjected to violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including sexual and gender-based violence. Children, both boys and girls, are forced to join armed groups, and the number of refugees and people displaced by armed conflicts continues to rise every day.

[*English*]

While everyone is affected, women and men, girls and boys generally experience conflict differently. They bring different perspectives to conflict resolution and peace building. Women broaden the agenda beyond that of the warring parties. The link between their meaningful participation and durable peace agreements has been established, yet women are often excluded from those peace processes.

In recognition of the different impact of conflict on women and girls and the unique abilities they bring to prevent and recover from conflict, the United Nations Security Council has, since 2000, passed eight resolutions, starting with Security Council resolution 1325 forming the basis of the women, peace and security agenda.

Members will recall that I spoke about Security Council resolution 1325 in my maiden speech; it was that important to me. I am very proud of how far our government has come to making it a reality.

Today's motion will go even further. When I worked in Norway, the project was implemented under its gender ambassador. I saw that giving women a strong voice at the highest possible level, an ambassador, had tangible results. Taking a feminist approach to peace and security is a smart, practical solution to address hard security needs.

We must deal with the serious problems of sexual violence and conflict as well as sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and other international personnel. We must ensure that the particular needs of women and girls are met during conflict and humanitarian crises, including access to sexual and reproductive health services. Addressing these problems has direct benefits for women, including those who are courageous defenders of peace or survivors of sexual violence. It also clearly contributes to the stability and security of all.

The full breadth of the Canadian government is united in the belief that gender equality serves as a foundation for more peaceful and secure nations and communities. Canada's second national action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security was launched last year.

The plan includes an increased number of federal partners, which has enabled our government to broaden its reach under the action plan to areas such as the protection of refugee women and countering violent extremism in Canada.

New commitments have increased available funding. We have launched multiple new initiatives, increasingly worked with civil society, and called upon Canadian officials at home and abroad to mobilize support for women as active agents of peace.

Canada's ambitions for change are bold, but are coupled with the understanding that lasting peace and change take time. For example, at the November 2017 Vancouver UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial, Canada launched the Elsie initiative for women in peace operations. It is a bold and innovative pilot project to increase the meaningful participation of women peacekeepers globally, make their work environment safer and more inclusive, and ultimately enhance the effectiveness of UN peace operations.

We believe that gender equality in UN peace operations is an important goal in itself, and that the inclusion of more military, civilian and police women peacekeepers can also have important benefits for operational effectiveness.

[*Translation*]

Throughout Canada's G7 presidency in 2018, the government has worked to promote gender equality through many different channels. It mobilized G7 members to support a G7 summit announcement in which they committed to investing nearly $3.8 billion to increase educational opportunities for women and girls in crisis and conflict situations. The G7 Women, Peace and Security Partnerships Initiative jointly launched by G7 members and eight partner countries is advancing gender equality and the rights of women in fragile and conflict-affected states. Canada also partnered with the United Kingdom and Bangladesh to launch the Women, Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network in order to bring about transformative cultural and institutional change in national armed forces.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Through the women's voice and leadership initiative, Canada is supporting local grassroots women's rights organizations. The new gender equality partnership with philanthropists and the private sector will bring new investments in support of women's rights.

Our government is committed to meeting its targets and investing where necessary to deliver on the objectives outlined in its renewed action plan.

Canada has a long history of advocating for and supporting gender equality, of promoting the empowerment of women and girls, of calling for the protection of their human rights, and of fighting sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict settings.

Canada was instrumental in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, and in bringing the issue of sexual violence against women to the UN's attention.

In 2000, Canada formed the group of friends of women, peace and security in New York, an informal group of over 50 UN member states. This group, currently chaired by Canada, shares information and best practices, and conducts periodic joint advocacy in the UN context. Canada founded a similar group in Geneva earlier this year.

Canada will continue to play a leading advocacy role at the UN on advancing the women, peace and security agenda, and engage with key UN agencies and a wide range of member states.

[*Translation*]

Commitments were made, funds were disbursed and new programs are being implemented. However, obtaining sustainable results that fulfill the government's ambitions will require regular and honest reviews of the areas needing improvement. The Government of Canada remains fully committed to working with all stakeholders of the group of friends of women, peace and security to ensure that we make ongoing, well-considered and steady progress toward achieving our common goals. The women, girls and all those living without peace and security deserve no less.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada remains engaged on this important issue. We are proud of our accomplishments, but are aware that there is more that can be done to advance this issue, both globally and nationally.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate and the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore, I will let her know that there are only about seven minutes remaining in the time for private members' business this afternoon, but of course she will have her remaining time when the House resumes business at a later occasion.

Resuming debate.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have the opportunity to rise to speak to the private member's motion put forward by my colleague from Etobicoke Centre on the establishment of a women, peace and security ambassador.

I am a former diplomat who spent the vast majority of my professional career representing Canada abroad consecutively and across governments of all stripes.

Canada has always stood for advancing the rights of women and girls and has certainly taken a number of actions to show the support of our great nation for them.

I will give some context as to the importance of this issue to me personally.

I was very fortunate from 2006 to 2008 to serve as the chargé d'affaires in El Salvador. El Salvador is a nation that has known war and strife. I was fortunate to be there for the 15-year celebration of peace. No one is more affected in a time of war, in a time when peace and security are lacking, than women and children. I am sure that the strife was absolutely devastating to witness at that time.

When I arrived in El Salvador as a representative of Canada 15 years after that time, El Salvador was still in the process of rebuilding. I was a part of that healing process, being there when we were working hard towards the millennium goals of the United Nations, something incredibly dear to my heart.

One of the issues that was important to us then was our work in regard to gangs and gang warfare, which was a terrible by-product of the civil war and that period of violence and strife in El Salvador.

Again, it was women and children were the most affected, and also the individuals we attempted to incorporate as part of our role as a nation in the rehabilitation of El Salvador through programs for women and children so that they would feel good about their place in society in this new era of peace and hopeful prosperity after the civil war. Children were affected, but it was certainly the women who played a pivotal role in my time there after the civil war.

In my capacity as a diplomat, I also had the opportunity to visit many prisons in El Salvador, as well as during my time in Argentina when we oversaw Paraguay. I recall going into these prisons and the individuals there who were attempting to reach out to me. As a woman, I felt a total lack of security in that environment.

I have had a career in this. This is an issue that is definitely very close to my heart.

In the past, Canada has played a key role in establishing the foundations for a global initiative to improve the health of women and children in the world's most vulnerable regions. A particular example of this was the maternal, newborn and child health initiative, MNCH, which was Canada's contribution to the G8 Muskoka initiative and the UN global strategy for women's and children's health.

This made-in-Canada initiative was implemented by the former Conservative government, and included $2.85 billion to achieve the overall goal of increased survival of mothers, newborns and children. The initiative focused on strengthening health systems, reducing the burden of disease, and improving nutrition. This initiative was not designed as a program.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to Africa this summer, Kenya in fact, and see the incredible results of this program, which is being implemented in Africa as we speak. The Harper government did good work with the implementation of vitamin A drops.

Certainly the health and well being of women are so deeply tied to the well-being of a nation.

● (1725)

Rather than being a program, it was designed as a thematic initiative with a strategic framework that was implemented through many program strategies. Real action and real results were apparent.

What my colleague across the aisle has brought forward to the House, although very honourable in spirit, is a non-binding motion, with no mandate, no costing and no deliverables. When the government of the day champions equal opportunity, women both home and abroad expect action with real results that show all of humanity moving forward together.

The presentation of this motion is rather symbolic. It is symbolic, unfortunately, of what we have come to see of the Liberal government. It includes a lot of talk and a lot of discussion on women, women's rights protection, yet it fails to take any concrete action as it is written. For these reasons, my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill proposed amendments that would take this symbolic virtue signalling to something with binding actions.

As previously mentioned, the United Nations passed resolutions to address women's challenges in conflict situations and women's potential to influence peace and security. Within my former department, many of my colleagues are working within peace and stabilization operations with a special emphasis on safety and security of women and girls in conflict zones. I, myself, was a security officer twice in my career, first at the embassy in San Salvador, El Salvador and, second, as deputy consul general at our consulate in Dallas, Texas.

This branch, a division of Global Affairs Canada, is headed by a senior government official with over 60 brilliant non-partisan public servants devoted to advancing women and security in conflict. I ask how the Liberals believe a symbolic, non-binding action will advance this cause. From this we might potentially conclude that hiring an ambassador would be redundant.

I should add that having served as the deputy head of a mission, chargé d'affaires, not once but twice, I feel I have a lot to contribute in regard to this topic. I look forward to continuing this discussion.

● (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: In fact, the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore will have approximately three minutes for her remarks when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, in June, I had the honour of asking the last question before Parliament adjourned for the summer. I asked how the government would ensure that provinces retained the revenues from carbon pricing given that if carbon pricing were included in the renewal of equalization, it would count against each province's equalization entitlement and thereby be clawed back.

The Prime Minister did not really answer this question on that day, but the next day the government clarified that it intended to renew the existing equalization program, which of course does not include carbon pricing. So it will not be clawed back, at least for the next several years. However, I must report that many of my constituents are not thrilled with the renewal of the existing equalization program. In both Saskatchewan and Alberta, there is a widespread view that the program is taking money from taxpayers in our province while we struggle to recover from the downturn in commodity prices and transfers it to provinces currently enjoying better economic times.

There have been some proposals to modify the equalization formula. One of them is to change the way in which hydroelectricity is traded. That might be a good proposal. It would certainly change the distribution of equalization transfers between recipient provinces that have hydroelectricity and those that do not. However, it actually would not make any difference to Saskatchewan and Alberta because neither province qualifies for equalization at all given that our provinces still enjoy relatively strong per capita incomes despite the downturn in commodity prices.

Another proposal we have heard on equalization is from Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe. It is essentially a proposal to cut equalization in half and then use the other half of the money to increase equal per capita transfers to all provinces. I certainly support increasing equal per capita transfers to all provinces. I have advocated for improvements to the Canada health and social transfers ever since I was elected, but I do not believe Premier Moe's plan can really be presented as a reform to equalization itself. As well, I do not actually believe the underlying issue is that Alberta or Saskatchewan need equalization or should qualify for the program. The real issue is that our provinces would benefit from fiscal stabilization in the face of extremely volatile commodity prices.

The Government of Canada has had a fiscal stabilization program since 1967. However, it has never paid anything to Saskatchewan. In 2016, Alberta was able to qualify for $250 million under this program, but that was really a drop in the bucket compared with billions of dollars in lost resource royalties.

What I would like to submit to the House is that rather than arguing so much about equalization, what we might look at doing is improving and enriching the existing fiscal stabilization program so that it would provide much more robust support to those provinces vulnerable to volatile commodity prices. I hope this is something the government will look at as it formulates the 2019 federal budget.

● (1735)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague and friend from Canada's second-newest political party, the CCF for the question.

From day one, our party has been focused on helping the middle class. We have programs like the Canada child benefit, that is putting more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families, and we have a tax cut for the middle class that raised taxes on the wealthiest 1%. Now, by putting a price on pollution, we are making life even more affordable for Canadians and more expensive for polluters.

I can confirm with my hon. colleague that the plan will involve keeping the revenues generated from putting a price on pollution in the province where those revenues are generated.

This is evidence that steps taken to protect the environment can in fact spur economic growth. It is possible to grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time.

With respect to the dividends of a price on pollution, our government's focus will remain on helping middle-class families in Canada. We know that any real plan to tackle climate change is going to involve a price on pollution. Pollution should not be free. Our plan is the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions while driving clean innovation and creating new jobs in the green economy.

According to the World Bank earlier this year, approximately 70 different jurisdictions were putting a price on pollution. We have evidence right here in Canada that putting a price on pollution works to cut emissions while maintaining economic growth. Nearly half of Canadians already live in a jurisdiction that puts a price on pollution.

B.C. has had a price on pollution for over a decade, and evidence shows it has helped cut fuel consumption and GHGs while the economy continued to experience growth. Alberta, where I used to live, has had a price on pollution for many years, and has among the highest employment rates in our entire country.

We know that Canadians are smart and innovative. Many Canadian companies are developing and implementing new technologies and solutions to cut pollution. In fact, Canadians have created over 500,000 jobs since we took office. Carbon pricing spurs innovation because the price signal it sends encourages businesses and households to be more efficient and pollute less. This government's preference has been to work with individual provinces and territories, if they are willing to take the responsible step and put forward a plan that will have a meaningful impact on emissions in their province.

Let me be clear: Canadians gave us a mandate in the 2015 election to protect the environment and grow the economy at the same time. Our plan at that time involved putting a price on pollution. The government has been consistent, saying that the revenue generated from putting a price on pollution is going to stay in those provinces.

Our approach allows for the flexibility for provinces and territories to choose the pricing system that works best for them. However, to deliver on the climate commitments we made with the provinces and territories in the pan-Canadian framework, we are going to ensure that there will be a price on carbon pollution throughout Canada.

That is why the Government of Canada is going to implement a federal pollution pricing system in provinces and territories that request it and in those that do not have a system that aligns with the federal standard.

Clean growth represents a massive economic opportunity around the world, one that the World Bank estimates will be worth $23 trillion globally between now and 2030. We want to be on the front edge of that wave.

We are taking action to ensure that the Canadian economy takes maximum advantage of this opportunity. Putting a price on pollution is a key part of this, by creating an incentive to reduce emissions and invest in innovation. Given the report that we saw in the National Post last night, we know it is going to be a net benefit for middle-class families in provinces and territories throughout Canada.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member across the way may not have come here prepared to discuss the fiscal stabilization program. It is somewhat of an arcane topic.

I will suggest two of the key problems with it. Currently, it is limited to only $60 per capita for a province that qualifies. That is a very low amount. It contrasts with the current equalization program, which amounts to about $500 per capita. I think there is room to lift that cap on the fiscal stabilization program.

A second challenge with the current formula is that to qualify for fiscal stabilization, a province needs to experience more than a 5% drop in its non-resource revenues. That happened to Alberta in 2016, but it is a fairly extreme occurrence. What I would suggest is that we might be able to have a compromise whereby we include half of natural resource revenues in the formula for the fiscal stabilization program, much as we already do for equalization.

● (1740)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to carry on the conversation, which I think will take more than the 60 seconds I have, offline with the member opposite, to discuss the ideas he may have to ensure that the revenues from putting a price on pollution are delivered in the most effective way.

In the meantime, we are going to continue to work with provinces and territories to implement our collective commitments to fight climate change and to promote clean growth as set out in the pan-Canadian framework. Our federal pollution pricing system will apply in provinces and territories that request it, and in those that do not have a system that is aligned with the federal benchmarks.

As I mentioned during my remarks, we will make every effort to ensure that the revenues generated from putting a price on pollution benefit the residents of the provinces in which the pollution is generated.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2016, as a brand new member of Parliament, the very first event I attended in Ottawa was the Party Under the Stars event at Ottawa City Hall, where veterans and their service dogs were championed.

Moving ahead to April 19, 2018, I asked this question in the House:

> Mr. Speaker, leading scientific research shows that quality service dogs significantly benefit the lives of our veterans who are struggling with PTSD. However, yesterday the government announced that it would not be providing a nationwide standard for the training of these dogs.
>
> We already know the Prime Minister has money for everyone but our veterans. Is he now saying that a national standard for the training of their service dogs is, well, also something more than he can give?

The recent Laval University study that the government has been waiting on reports that there are significant decreases in PTSD symptoms with our veterans when they have these service dogs. It improves their sleep quality, depression symptoms, feelings of safety, and self-esteem, and they have more energy and a better quality of life, which is huge.

Yesterday, in his answer to this very question put by the member for Courtenay—Alberni, the Prime Minister said that the Liberal government does not agree with or is not willing to recognize the obvious health benefits of service dogs. However, when I originally asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs about the national standards for service dogs, in his answer he did not dispute their effectiveness as the Prime Minister did yesterday. He said, "We will establish a standard for them."

Global News has reported sources that say the government is stalling, delaying its efforts to implement the Laval University report findings until it has received additional information. The sources say the government now wants to wait for another American study showing that service dogs improve the quality of life for veterans suffering from PTSD before it makes a decision. This is despite the fact that Veterans Affairs discounted a previous American study in favour of waiting for the Laval University study.

Americans do a study, and we do not like the results, so we say we will wait for a Canadian study. The Canadian study comes out with similar conclusions to the first American study and, apparently unhappy with those results, we are now waiting on another American study.

According to a recent Global News report, there is now a two-year backlog in service dog requests. The minister said, "We will establish a standard for them." Where is he in this process? Does he stand by what he said? Has he included the cutting-edge research from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, as he indicated he would when I brought it up in committee? Who has been invited to be involved in this process, and who is developing the standards for service dogs for our veterans across Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for raising the issue of the health and well-being of our men and women in uniform.

[*English*]

I could not agree more with her sentiment. This government is committed to ensuring eligible veterans and retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and their families have access to what they need when they need it. That includes a suite of services and supports for mental health needs, which are a priority for our government.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

We know that most veterans have a smooth transition, but that some have problems. In the context of the Life After Service Studies, approximately one-third of regular force veterans reported that they were having difficulty transitioning to civilian life. Approximately 20% reported that their mental health was fragile. Of these, 16% told us that they had post-traumatic stress disorder. We know that for some people affected by post-traumatic stress a dog is much more than just a best friend. It is truly a support.

[*English*]

The veterans have told us that service dogs can be beneficial for some suffering with conditions like PTSD, playing an important role in helping them cope. This is why we expanded the medical expense tax credit to recognize costs for these service animals. That was an important first step.

[*Translation*]

We invested in a pilot study, which my colleague mentioned, to look at using service dogs as a safe and effective means of support for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

This study is complete, and the department is currently reviewing the findings. The final report will be considered in any decisions on the policy regarding service dogs. We must be patient.

[*English*]

We remain committed to ensuring that Canadian veterans receive the best support possible. In the meantime, we have many other services and supports in place for those who need help now.

[*Translation*]

Veterans Affairs Canada will have a network of more than 4,000 mental health professionals and more than 11 clinics specializing in operational stress, across the country, to help those struggling with PTSD or with any operational stress-related trauma.

We are developing a centre of excellence on mental health, which will help us learn more about PTSD and other related mental health conditions.

[*English*]

The new centre of excellence will provide information, best practices and research results to front-line health professionals who will help ensure our women and men in uniform receive the most comprehensive and consistent care possible.

[*Translation*]

The government is committed to improving the well-being of veterans and their families. It will continue to ensure that they have access to the resources and support they need for their mental health and well-being.

[*English*]

Make no mistake, this government is clear in its mission to improve the overall well-being of veterans and their families. We are committed to ensuring they have access to the supports and resources they need for their mental health and wellness.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, as we know, a veteran's dog could be a real gift to him or her and actually to VAC as well, a medical assistance of sorts, a proactive preventative treatment that means fewer pharmaceuticals, less cost to the government, and a healthier veteran if we were to provide this service immediately as a priority rather than delaying its coming into place.

The Laval study clearly indicates national standards need to be established. A dog has a medical purpose and there need to be well-defined standards for what constitutes a legitimate service dog.

There are two university studies going on in my province right now that could be used immediately to help come up with the answers we need. Anyone wanting to either donate or sell service dogs to our veterans needs to conform to a standard so veterans can be sure they are getting dogs from ethical providers. Unfortunately, as in all sectors of the economy, there are those in this field who would appear to want to attempt to make a lot of money if not restricted. We need to ensure that vulnerable veterans in need of this service are protected and that VAC has developed a network of certified providers, that they are available, and they are ready.

I want to know if the minister is aware of the conflict-of-interest issues that have plagued the development of a national standard for veterans service dogs and the role that has played in these veterans not receiving the care they should have right now.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her dedication to this file, which is an issue we both hold dear.

If veterans need any kind of help when they return, we will be there. That is the message we want to get across today. We want to make sure that all veterans, all members of the Canadian Armed Forces and those of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have access to the services and support they need. We will be there.

We are now conducting the necessary studies.

[*English*]

We have come a long way in supporting them, and there is still work to be done. This government will never cease in its efforts to improve the lives of our veterans and their families.

[*Translation*]

The studies we are working on now include research on service dogs, and I would be happy to work on this further with my colleague.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking questions about asylum seekers and Roxham Road in Quebec for months now. Quebec has asked us to be proactive. Many asylum seekers have been coming to Canada since the Prime Minister's tweet, and we need to know how to differentiate between illegal migrants, refugees and legal immigrants. Everyone seems confused about this. We are talking here about illegal migrants, those who enter Canada illegally at a breach in the border.

On television—more so on French television than on English TV—we have heard that people are flying from Haiti to the United States and then crossing into Canada at Roxham Road. That is a problem. We know that the members opposite will tell us that fewer people are doing that now. That may be true, but there are still people crossing the border illegally and that is causing problems in ridings like mine. Allow me to explain.

At the beginning of the summer, a family in my riding was reunited. An immigrant who settled in my riding 15 years ago separated from his wife and she moved to England. They are both African. This summer, he called me in a panic. He and his wife share custody of their daughter who comes to Canada every year at the end of May to spend the summer with her father. However, this year, she was denied a visa because she had had not been back to Canada for a year. That was only natural because her mother had legal custody and all the papers.

In short, at Roxham Road, I asked the following question a number of times. Given the unprecedented crisis created by this infamous tweet, does the Prime Minister think it is acceptable for people to break the law by crossing the border illegally?

● (1755)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and for being here this evening.

[*English*]

As the government has stated clearly in this House many times before, we have a very robust plan in place to address this situation and guide our future actions.

[*Translation*]

Before I describe the plan in detail again, I would like to emphasize that our asylum system exists to save lives, protect people who have been displaced or persecuted, and fulfill Canada's international obligations with respect to refugees. Basically, our measures stem from a six-point plan that IRCC developed to deal with irregular migration.

[*English*]

First, we are operationally ready for any possible scenario, which is something I really want to emphasize in my remarks tonight. We have a robust awareness of the situation at the border across the country and are able to respond to influxes when they occur. While we have seen a notable decrease in the number of arrivals compared with the same period last year, as my hon. colleague pointed out, our ongoing contingency planning at all levels of government ensures our ongoing preparedness.

[*Translation*]

Second, we are keeping our border secure. Appropriate resources have been deployed to ensure that no individual leaves an entry point before undergoing an initial screening. People who cross our border irregularly are arrested and, like all asylum claimants, subjected to a thorough security screening.

We are also continuing to fulfill our humanitarian, legal and international obligations. People who are genuinely fleeing persecution have the right to claim asylum, and they have the right to due process. We treat asylum seekers respectfully and humanely. Those who are found to be refugees may settle in Canada, but those who do not need Canada's protection are deported.

[*English*]

We have proactive international engagement to deter irregular migration. We are working with key source and transit countries to deter irregular migration, as well as the U.S., which is responding directly to the concerns raised by my hon. colleague about those who are trying to circumvent our immigration system.

We also have strong engagement with provincial and municipal partners on delivery of services to asylum claimants and irregular migrants, including for temporary housing. We have made an initial $50 million available to address the housing pressures faced by provinces and municipalities and are prepared to continue collaborating with willing partners and prepared to contribute federal resources to develop shared solutions.

Finally, we have a robust outreach strategy to correct misinformation about Canada's asylum system. This includes ministers and MPs reaching out to communities in Canada and the United States so that people understand that Canada has a rules-based system. It also includes social media monitoring to correct misinformation and to deter irregular migrants before they arrive in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Our efforts are paying off, and the situation is much improved.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

We are in the inner sanctum here tonight. We are basically the only ones here, as my colleague said.

I understand the difference between someone who enters the country legally and someone who is seeking refuge in Canada. However, I am talking about illegal immigrants. We need to distinguish between the two, and that is where the problem lies. People do not understand that.

On August 25, 2018, in a letter to the Canadian Bar Association that was published in a newspaper, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship admitted that the number of refugee claimants far exceeded what the current system can handle.

The National Post noted that the letter's tone was unusually strong for the minister in question, who often describes Canada's immigration and border control system as strict and efficient. The article talks about two different realities.

I personally have been asking for quite some time—

● (1800)

The Deputy Speaker: Members have only one minute for their second intervention.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague that we must correct the misinformation out there.

I am very proud of the members of caucus and the government who travelled to the United States and Africa to speak with communities, to be able to be there and set the record straight.

We are very proud of the fact that the figures are down compared to August of last year.

The message we want to convey to the rest of the world is that we have a strong immigration system and that there is no free pass to enter Canada.

As I said, we are proud of the very positive results. I hope that this will carry on. We will continue to work hard to ensure that it does.

I wish my hon. colleague a wonderful evening.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:02 p.m.)

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